



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 116th session

Summary record of the 3180th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 26 November 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

Contents

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention (*continued*)

*Combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of New Zealand
(continued)*

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports of New Zealand (continued) (CERD/C/NZL/23-24; CERD/C/NZL/Q/23-24)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of New Zealand joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Stavrinaki** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee welcomed the State Party's recognition, in its combined twenty-third and twenty-fourth periodic reports (CERD/C/NZL/23-24), of the importance of Māori customs, world views and cultural heritage in shaping policy and legislation and its acknowledgement of the ongoing social and economic inequalities affecting Māori and Pacific peoples. However, she was concerned that addressing structural inequalities and advancing substantive equality in line with article 2 (2) of the Convention was regarded not as a human rights obligation but as a source of division or as a burden. She would appreciate an explanation of how the State Party addressed structural and intersectional inequalities and how it implemented special measures and targeted initiatives to ensure substantive equality.
3. In the light of the finding of the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey that 94% of sexual assaults went unreported, she would be grateful for additional information on measures developed in consultation with Māori and Pacific women, women from ethnic and religious minority communities and migrant women to strengthen community-driven prevention strategies and address the root causes of gender-based violence. She would also like to know whether the State Party intended to undertake reforms to address the structural discrimination, pay inequity, underrepresentation in leadership and linguistic and cultural marginalization experienced by Pacific women.
4. Although Māori made up almost half of the deaf population, they reportedly faced barriers in access to culturally appropriate services, education, employment, digital inclusion and participation in cultural life. She therefore wished to know whether the State Party planned to address those issues, for example, by improving data collection, expanding interpreter capacity and including deaf Māori in digital reform efforts. She wondered how the State Party ensured that Māori and Pacific persons with disabilities had access to appropriate disability support.
5. Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities continued to face severe housing inequities, including housing deprivation, overcrowding and poor quality housing, while the reintroduction of no-cause evictions under the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act had further worsened housing insecurity and homelessness. She would therefore be interested to know whether the State Party planned to invest in housing programmes for Māori, Pacific, ethnic and refugee communities. It would be useful to know what steps had been taken to strengthen accountability mechanisms for racial discrimination in the private housing market and to protect Pacific and other vulnerable communities from climate-related risks.
6. The Committee would appreciate an explanation of how the Māori Health Strategy addressed persistent health inequities affecting Māori, Pacific, ethnic and refugee communities, women, gender-diverse people and people with disabilities, including high rates of cervical and bowel cancer, inequitable access to prescription medication and underfunding of Māori health providers. It would be particularly interested to know whether the Strategy included measures to tackle racial bias within the health system, cultural and language barriers, workplace discrimination and ethnically motivated attacks and unfair treatment targeting Māori staff. The delegation might also comment on the reported weakening of tobacco control policies and the exclusion of persons with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder from access to publicly funded disability support – issues that disproportionately affected communities vulnerable to racial discrimination.
7. Pacific, Māori and ethnic minority workers continued to face persistent pay gaps and discrimination in the workplace. It had been reported that the Equal Pay Amendment Act 2025 significantly restricted access to pay equality remedies by cancelling existing claims and limiting future ones, with the greatest impact felt by Māori, Pacific and ethnic women

working in low-paid, female-dominated sectors. She therefore wished to know whether the Government would consider introducing mandatory gender and ethnic pay gap reporting to ensure the transparency and accountability of employers. Given that Māori, Pacific and ethnic minority households were overrepresented among recipients of welfare benefits, she wished to know whether the State Party planned to reform its policies to strengthen income and employment assistance.

8. Paragraph 70 of the report suggested that little progress had been achieved in implementing the Committee's 2017 recommendations regarding the Treaty of Waitangi and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Committee was concerned about the absence of formal recognition of the Treaty as the authoritative constitutional foundation of New Zealand; limited engagement with the independent Māori-led initiative, Matike Mai Aoteroa, on efforts to advance constitutional justice; regression in the legal recognition and practical application of Māori rights to self-determination; and reports of interference with and insufficient funding of the Waitangi Tribunal. Consequently, it wished to know how the State Party was giving effect to its treaty-based and international legal obligations to ensure that legacies of colonization, particularly the deprivation of Māori sovereignty and control over natural resources and land, were not perpetuated.

9. Concerns had also been raised about the effectiveness of settlement processes, including the limited restoration of Māori lands, territories and resources and the limited availability of redress options. Proposed amendments to the Resource Management Act and the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act could severely restrict Māori customary rights and harm their interests. In its decision 1 (66) of 2005, the Committee had found that the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004 contained discriminatory aspects insofar as it extinguished the possibility of establishing Māori customary title over the foreshore and seabed and failed to provide a guaranteed right of redress. The Committee was further concerned that referendum processes could limit Māori influence over decisions affecting their rights. The delegation might therefore provide an update on settlement processes and other measures of redress; explain how the State Party ensured the free, prior and informed consent of Māori regarding decisions that affected their traditional lands, coastal and marine areas; and clarify what steps were being taken to ensure that the aforementioned legislative amendments did not interfere with Māori customary rights. It would also be useful to know what steps the State Party was taking to align its climate commitments with the Convention and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to mitigate the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on Māori livelihoods and cultural practices.

10. The Committee was also concerned about the inadequate protection and promotion of tikanga Māori (Māori custom), te reo Māori (the Māori language) and Māori cultural expression in the parliament and other public institutions. It would welcome up-to-date information on measures to strengthen the protection of Māori intellectual property and cultural expression and to ensure that Māori with sensory disabilities had access to culturally appropriate support.

11. It had been reported that the State Party faced challenges in supporting te reo Māori education, including insufficient funding for teacher training, and that recent legislative and policy changes risked reversing gains in Māori and Pacific student achievement. She would therefore appreciate an explanation of the curricular reforms that had taken place since 2023, including information on the extent of Māori participation and clarification of whether changes to the school transport assistance policy disadvantaged students attending Māori immersion schools.

12. Lastly, given the Ombudsman's findings of shortcomings in case handling by the Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, particularly in its interactions with parents with disabilities, she wished to know what measures the State Party was taking to identify and provide appropriate support for parents with disabilities, to improve communication and coordination and to engage with organizations of persons with disabilities. Why had the State Party repealed section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act, and how did the State Party ensure that decisions affecting children in State care gave full consideration to whakapapa (genealogical and ancestral connections)?

13. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Government had responded to the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care by putting in place a redress package worth over 500 million dollars (\$NZ). It had prioritized the award of compensation over organizational change, but would assess the need to establish an independent redress mechanism in the course of a review scheduled for 2027.

14. Neither the Employment Relations Authority nor the Employment Court collected information on the ethnicity of applicants in racial discrimination cases. Between 1 July 2020 and May 2025, the Authority had heard five claims of racial discrimination or harassment, one of which had been successful and four unsuccessful.

15. The number of Māori and Pasifika individuals in the prison population partly reflected the relatively youthful population structure of those communities. Nevertheless, it was true that Māori and, to a lesser extent, Pacific peoples, were disproportionately represented in incarceration rates. In 2019, the Department of Corrections had launched the Hōkai Rangi strategy as a pathway to the social reintegration of Māori prisoners. The strategy had been refreshed in 2024. The Department of Corrections sought to apply the Māori world view when working with Māori inmates and had established various partnership and service agreements with different Māori providers. Specialist units provided rehabilitation pathways focused on Māori principles and practices, which also underpinned most residential alcohol and drug programmes in prisons. The Ministry of Justice funded the Whakaoranga te Mana Tangata initiative, in which the authorities worked with iwi (tribes) to support Māori offenders during court proceedings.

16. The Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children cooperated extensively with iwi and Māori social service organizations across the country, recognizing the disproportionate number of Māori children in its care. It also worked closely with communities and iwi providers under the Oranga Rangatahi programme, which was designed to prevent at-risk Māori young people from entering the formal youth justice system. The Ministry was working to respond to the recommendations made by the Ombudsman.

17. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Government invested billions of dollars in housing, including the allocation of State housing and the payment of accommodation supplements through the welfare system. Recognizing the need for adequate emergency accommodation, the Government had succeeded in moving a large number of families who had been living in motels into more stable and appropriate housing, notably in Rotorua. The changes introduced under the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act were designed to ensure that the small minority of disruptive tenants faced consequences for their actions, allowing their neighbours to live in peace.

18. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Government's housing priorities included increasing the supply of developable land, making it cheaper and easier to build and improving rental markets. The House of Representatives was currently considering revisions to the Te Ture Whenua Māori Act that would make it easier for Māori who owned land to build homes. The Government had released new national environmental standards for papakainga – multiple homes usually built on a single plot of communally owned land – which would allow Māori and other New Zealanders to develop papakainga without resource consent.

19. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Māori Health Strategy worked in combination with several other government strategies, including those on mental health, Pacific health, women's health, rural health and disability. In September 2025, the Government had adopted the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Action Plan 2025–2028, developed with the assistance of a Māori advisory group. The Māori Health Strategy, the New Zealand Health Strategy, the Women's Health Strategy and the New Zealand Disability Strategy all addressed racism and focused on delivering health services that were safe, effective, culturally appropriate and non-discriminatory. Improvements had been seen in women's health, including in cervical and breast screening. Between 2019 and 2024, funding for Māori health providers had increased by 88.7%, while the number of providers had risen from 240 to 320. The Government had adopted the All-of-Government Pacific Well-being Strategy, focusing on priorities such as economic growth, health, housing, education and law and order, and Te Mana Ola, the Pacific Health Strategy. Thanks to a continued focus on

reducing tobacco consumption, daily smoking prevalence among Māori had halved from 30% to 15% over the previous five years, making a positive difference to long-term health outcomes.

20. **A representative of New Zealand** said that New Zealand had had legislation on equal pay for equal work since the 1970s, and there was no longer any debate about the issue. Legislation on the broader issue of pay equity between different groups was in place and allowed for claims to be brought forward.

21. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Government provided support for women in finding and retaining employment. The Employment Action Plan was designed to improve labour market outcomes for all New Zealanders, including Māori women, Pacific women and women from ethnic communities, by helping people to find work and ensuring that they had the skills to succeed. Amendments had been made to the Equal Pay Act regarding the processing of remedies for the undervaluation of female-dominated work; claims could be resubmitted and would be considered under the new framework. In 2024, the Ministry for Women had launched a gender pay gap toolkit to support businesses in understanding, measuring and voluntarily reporting on their gender pay gaps.

22. **A representative of the New Zealand** said that the Government strongly supported the current constitutional arrangements, including equal voting rights, equality before the law and the people's ability to change their government through democratic elections. Discussions were ongoing in relation to the issue of Māori self-determination under the Treaty of Waitangi. There were those who advocated for an entirely separate justice system for Māori. The Government, however, would continue to engage in efforts to include Māori communities in the justice system. For instance, the Te Ao Mārama model for district courts offered a justice approach that drew upon Māori engagement and understanding in a unique way.

23. The Government was currently seeking to amend the Resource Management Act in order to make it easier to build houses and infrastructure, thus boosting investment and economic growth. Consultation arrangements with local Māori were being considered as part of the proposed reform.

24. As inhabitants of an island nation, most New Zealanders engaged in coastal activities. The Marine and Coastal Area Act 2011 had created a process whereby Māori applicants could apply to have their customary rights acknowledged. The House of Representatives had set a high threshold for such acknowledgement, recognizing that rights holders would be able withhold consent for activities such as aquaculture. As the courts in their judgments had materially changed that threshold, the Government had decided to amend the Act in order to reaffirm what had been a clear instruction from the parliament.

25. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said she was keen to receive additional information on settlement processes, including in respect of the amount of land restored to Māori; on consultations with Māori; and on the impact of referendums and other processes likely to undermine Māori traditional rights.

26. **Ms. Tlakula** (Follow-up Rapporteur) said that, in its follow-up report of 2018 (CERD/C/NZL/CO/21-22/Add.1), the State Party had provided information on the implementation of the recommendation contained in paragraph 15 of the previous concluding observations (CERD/C/NZL/CO/21-22). In its response, the Committee had called upon the State Party to collect and provide information on the extent of land returned through settlement process and land that was not subject to settlement process. Paragraph 156 of the periodic report, however, stated that the Crown did not collect statistics on the percentage of land historically lost or returned through the settlement process. She wished to know why that was so and how, in the absence of such statistics, the Government evaluated the success or failure of the settlement process.

27. In response to the information provided by the State Party in follow-up to paragraph 17 of the previous concluding observations, the Committee had called on the State Party to report on the public consultations on the review of the Plant Variety Rights Act 1987 and the potential impact on the enjoyment of Māori intellectual and cultural property rights and Māori treasured possessions. According to the report currently under consideration, a

new bill on plant variety rights had been submitted to the House of Representatives in May 2021. She wondered whether that bill had been adopted and, if so, what the impact of the new law had been.

28. In its follow-up letter, the Committee had reiterated its recommendation for the State Party to publish a plan with targets and a timetable for implementing the remainder of the recommendations contained in the Waitangi Tribunal report *Ko Aotearoa Tēnei: A Report into Claims Concerning New Zealand Law and Policy Affecting Māori Culture and Identity* (Wai 262 report). Paragraph 139 of the periodic report stated that, in 2019, the Government had agreed to develop a whole-of-government strategy to address Wai 262 issues. She wished to know whether that strategy had been adopted and, if so, what the outcome of its implementation had been.

29. **Ms. McDougall** said she would be grateful if the delegation could confirm that Māori had been separated from 97% of the land they had once owned, and that less than 1% of the land lost had been returned to them. She would also appreciate clarification of the extent to which citizens enjoyed equal voting rights, equality before the law and equal access to justice, in law and in practice.

30. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that, in the light of concerns about the amendment of the Marine and Coastal Area Act, she wished to know whether the country's constitutional arrangements included legally enforceable provisions whereby discriminatory laws could be challenged and overturned and, if so, what those provisions were. She would also like to know whether New Zealand had any constitutional provisions concerning the retroactive application of laws.

31. **Ms. Shepherd** said that, while people of African descent accounted for only a small percentage of the population, she nonetheless wished to know the extent and severity of the racial discrimination to which they might be exposed. She wondered whether the education system prepared the population to understand different cultures, such as those of people of African descent and migrants, and allowed them to dismantle stereotypes.

32. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that Māori reportedly accounted for a fifth of the population, yet made up about 52% of the prison population. According to the report, 16% of District Court judges were Māori. He wished to know whether the State Party would adopt special measures to allow for the appointment of more Māori judges, with a view to better including Māori in the administration of justice.

33. Regarding the Marine and Coastal Area Act, he wondered why it was necessary for Māori to apply for the recognition of their customary rights. He would be interested to hear examples of cases in which the Act had been applied successfully.

34. **Mr. Guissé**, recalling that other treaty bodies had looked into the problem of suicides among Māori, said that he would like to know whether it had structural causes, such as the legacies of colonization, and whether measures had been put in place to effectively address it.

35. The Committee was grateful to civil society for its invitation to conduct a field visit to New Zealand in the framework of its early warning and urgent action procedure. The Committee would be willing to undertake such a visit, which would provide it with an opportunity to better understand the situation of Indigenous communities in New Zealand and to strengthen its dialogue with the State Party.

36. **Mr. Diaby** said that the Committee would be glad to receive statistics on the Māori attendance rate at all levels of education. He was curious to know how school textbooks taught new generations about the past and whether they described the historical injustices to which Māori and other communities had been subjected.

37. He would also be interested to know what steps had been taken to ensure that Māori had access to health services in their own language and to train health personnel to take account of cultural differences. He wondered whether the national public health plan incorporated Māori traditional medicine and whether the State Party had a legal framework that governed the relationship between traditional and modern medicine.

38. **Ms. Tebie** said that the Committee had been informed that in 2025 the Government had decided to end the compulsory teaching of Māori language and culture – a decision that had been widely perceived as a setback. She wished to know what the consequences might be for the vitality and transmission of the Māori language and for relations between the State and Māori communities. Was the decision contrary to the commitments given by the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi?

39. **A representative of New Zealand** said that it had long been the case that votes in general elections carried equal weight. The Government had no desire to move away from the principle of equality before the law. Like many other countries, New Zealand strived to ensure equal access to justice for all, although much remained to be done in order to achieve that goal.

40. Figures on the percentage of Māori land that had been returned were unavailable. However, there had been 102 deeds of settlement of Treaty of Waitangi claims, with total financial and commercial redress in the amount of \$NZ 2.7 billion, and such settlements continued to be negotiated. New Zealand as a country had set out to acknowledge and make amends for the misdeeds of the past and to reach settlements that allowed affected groups to rebuild their economic strength. Such efforts could not restore everything that had been lost, but represented a best endeavour by the people of the current generation. The settlement process had enjoyed cross-party support for more than 30 years.

41. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the New Zealand education system supported the Māori language through Puna Reo and Kōhanga Reo early learning services, which over the previous three years had seen increased enrolment after a long period of decline. The system included kura kaupapa (primary schools), *wharekura* (secondary schools) and *wānanga* (centres of Māori learning and research), universities and other tertiary education institutions in which Māori was the language of instruction.

42. Since the submission of the periodic report, the number of learners participating in Māori language education in Māori-medium settings had increased. In 2024, 12.4% of Māori students and 3.19% of all students were involved in Māori-medium education. As of July 2024, 30% of the total school population studied the Māori language in English-medium schools, up from 28% in 2023. In the recent budget, the Government had allocated additional funding to develop teachers' skills in the Māori language; to establish a virtual learning network to deliver online teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in Māori-medium secondary education; and to establish the Māori language as a new subject in the upper-secondary curriculum.

43. The history of New Zealand had formed part of the New Zealand Curriculum and its Māori-medium counterpart, Te Marautanga o Aotearoa, since 2023. Both curricula addressed colonialism and its impact in the context of New Zealand. As part of an ongoing curricular review, the areas that related to New Zealand history were being updated to ensure a good balance of local, national and international content, giving students the opportunity to learn about key aspects of the country's history and link them to wider events. The new content would reflect the country's broad cultural diversity and the traditions of its people.

44. There had been no policy changes to transport funding for Māori-medium education. Māori students attending the Māori-medium school closest to their home continued to be eligible for transport assistance; for other learners, the requirement was for them to be enrolled at their closest local school.

45. **A representative of New Zealand** said that a significant share of the funding available through agencies such as Creative New Zealand and NZ on Air was allocated to Māori cultural and broadcasting activities. In recent years, there had been a particular focus on improving understanding of traditional Māori New Year celebrations.

46. **A representative of New Zealand** said that, since the publication of the Wai 262 report in 2011, the Government had continued to find ways of ensuring the effective recognition of Indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions across a wide range of domains at the domestic and international levels. More than \$NZ 11 million had been invested in efforts to increase the capacity of the Māori community to take a leading role in the protection of its traditional knowledge and cultural expressions. Internationally, a step

forward had been made through the successful conclusion in May 2024 of the World Intellectual Property Organization Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge. The Government's key priority was now to strengthen the protection of Indigenous flora and fauna and address the regulatory barriers affecting the use of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

47. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the proportion of District Court judges who were of Māori descent had increased from 16% in 2020 to 24% in 2025.

48. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the funding allocated to the Waitangi Tribunal and the Māori Land Court had remained unchanged despite the fiscal challenges faced by the Government. There was no specific programme in place to increase the number of Māori judges; the rise observed in recent years was attributable to the fact that more members of that community were qualifying as lawyers and could thus apply for positions within the judiciary.

49. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Government was focused on encouraging as many people as possible to find jobs so that they were not reliant on welfare payments. It was currently exploring ways of reducing the number of adolescents who received such payments, since it had been shown that individuals who began to receive payments at a young age were much more likely to rely on them for long periods of their lives.

50. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Government's social investment approach was based on addressing individuals' needs across a wide range of areas, including housing, education and employment. The approach facilitated the coordination of support services and delivered outcomes that could be more easily monitored.

51. **A representative of New Zealand** said that section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act, which set out the steps to be taken by the Ministry's Chief Executive to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi, had been repealed in order to ensure that the Act was focused solely on guaranteeing the safety and well-being of children. The Independent Children's Monitor would nonetheless continue to report on the outcomes achieved by the Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children for Māori children and young people and their whanau (extended family).

52. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Ministry for Primary Industries was working with the Māori community to develop Māori-led approaches to reducing biological emissions. The Ministry for the Environment and the National Iwi Chairs Forum had run a joint programme to evaluate the climate change readiness of more than 1,000 marae (Māori meeting grounds) and planned to follow up on that work by conducting a detailed assessment of how many of those marae were vulnerable to flooding and other climate-related events. The Ministry had also established a platform for investing in Māori-led climate resilience projects.

53. **Ms. Tlakula** said that she would welcome a response to her questions on the absence of statistics pertaining to the land settlement process and on the bill on plant variety rights.

54. **Ms. Shepherd** invited the delegation to reply to her earlier question on any racial discrimination faced by individuals of African descent and the measures taken within the education system to ensure that children had an understanding of different cultures.

55. **The Chair** said that, in view of the recent issuance by the International Court of Justice of an advisory opinion on the obligations of States in respect of climate change, he wished to know whether the State Party was part of any regional initiatives that had been developed to address matters such as climate change, the diversity of Indigenous Peoples and the prohibition of racial discrimination.

56. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the delegation would endeavour to calculate the percentage of land returned through the Treaty settlement process and provide the Committee with that information. It should be borne in mind that a number of settlement procedures had concerned land within publicly owned conservation areas, which accounted for one third of the country's land mass. In such cases, it had been agreed that the land would not be directly returned to the iwi concerned, but that the iwi would have significant input

into its management. The ultimate measure of the settlement process's success was the fact that settlements had been reached, since it was not compulsory for groups to settle.

57. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Plant Varieties Rights Act of 2022 contained provisions recognizing Māori traditional knowledge as a valid and protected form of knowledge. The Act also provided for the establishment of the Māori Plant Varieties Committee, which was responsible for reviewing plant variety rights applications concerning taonga (treasured or culturally significant species), assessing the impact that the granting of those rights would have on any guardianship relationships and making binding recommendations on such matters.

58. **A representative of New Zealand** said that New Zealand was an active member of the Pacific Islands Forum, for which climate change was a key issue.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at noon.

59. **Mr. Kut** (Country Task Force) said that he would welcome information on the suspension of several Māori parliamentarians following a protest in the parliament and how that measure was compatible with the right to freedom of speech. Updated information on the representation of ethnic minorities in the parliament and Māori participation in political life would be appreciated. The delegation might comment on what had been done to ensure that the adoption of the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Act of 2024, which lay down the requirement for local authorities to conduct referendums on the establishment of Māori electoral wards, would not prevent members of that community from participating in local government. It would be interesting to learn, too, what strategies were being developed to prevent racially motivated hate speech, including by elected officials, during the 2026 elections.

60. He would be grateful for an update on the implementation of the Former Refugee, Recent Migrants and Ethnic Communities Employment Action Plan, the Refugee Resettlement Strategy and the Migrant Settlement and Immigration Strategy and any steps taken to evaluate their effectiveness. He wondered what challenges the State Party had encountered in resettling refugees who had arrived under the Refugee Quota Programme and what solutions had been put in place. It would be useful to know whether the Ethnic Communities Development Fund still existed and, if so, what its resources were spent on and what outcomes had been achieved. The delegation might indicate whether asylum-seekers continued to be held in detention facilities and whether the State Party planned to introduce any alternatives to migration detention. A description of any measures taken to address ethnic pay gaps in the public sector would be appreciated, as would an update on the implementation of the Plan of Action against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery. He wished to know whether the current administration planned to adopt legislation on modern slavery.

61. **A representative of New Zealand** said that 7 of the 120 seats in the parliament were reserved for representatives of the Māori community. Around one half of seats were allocated to candidates who had been elected by their constituents, while the other half were filled by individuals who had been selected from party lists. That practice had led to a steady increase in the percentage of parliamentarians who had Māori ancestry, which currently stood at 27%. Figures on the representation of other ethnic groups in the parliament could be provided in writing after the meeting. Within the executive branch, 7 of the 20 current members, or 35%, had Māori ancestry. The requirement for local councils to hold referendums to determine whether to establish Māori electoral wards had been abolished by the previous Administration. The current Government had decided to overturn that decision based on the premise that the population should have the ability to vote on such matters. The outcomes of the referendums, which had been organized during the most recent round of local elections, had been mixed; voters in 24 of the 42 referendums held had decided that the Māori wards should be removed.

62. The parliament's Privileges Committee had decided to suspend a number of individuals who had been deemed to have acted in an intimidating manner towards their fellow parliamentarians. Those individuals had not been suspended for performing a haka, which was often performed in the parliament during discussions on legislation relating to the Treaty settlement process.

63. **A representative of New Zealand** said that, while charter schools were not obliged to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi, a number of new charter schools that taught students using kaupapa Māori (Māori approaches) had been opened.

64. The proportion of migrants who had reported having faced discrimination had fallen from 20.5% in 2021 to 17.4% in 2023. The employment rate among recent migrants was improving and tended to be higher than that observed among nationals of New Zealand. The rate of migrants gaining certain qualifications also exceeded the national average.

65. **A representative of New Zealand** said that New Zealand was proud of its long history of welcoming refugees. Since the country's previous review before the Committee, the number of refugees it accepted annually under the Refugee Quota Programme had increased to 1,500 refugees. In addition, more than 400 refugee and protection claims had been accepted between 1 January 2021 and 30 April 2025. Asylum-seekers had access to public legal, interpretation and healthcare services. Individuals who obtained a temporary visa had the right to work, study and receive social security. Those who were not granted such a visa received a weekly allowance, and any children or young people concerned had access to education on the same basis as New Zealanders. Immigration New Zealand produced an annual report on the outcomes of the Refugee Resettlement Strategy, the scope of which had been extended in 2023 to cover a wider range of groups.

66. National immigration legislation provided for a number of situations in which migrants and asylum-seekers could be detained. The legislation was consistent with international law and the Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers and Alternatives to Detention. The country had no immigration detention centres, which meant that migrants and asylum-seekers tended to live within communities. They were detained in prisons only as a last resort in exceptional circumstances and for the shortest possible period of time to achieve the purpose of the detention. Between 2015 and 2020, 86 asylum-seekers had spent time in prison, with the average detention period being eight days. The use of alternatives to the short-term detention of migrants and asylum-seekers was considered in every case with a view to ensuring that no or minimal restrictions were placed on an individual's liberty. Decisions were made by a dedicated panel, which, since its establishment in 2022, had approved the use of non-custodial measures in 48 of the 71 cases it had considered. Legislation that would provide for the introduction of electronic monitoring to verify an individual's compliance with the conditions of his or her release was currently before the parliament.

67. **A representative of New Zealand** said that one of the Government's main focuses in the education sector was on improving school attendance, which had long been on the decrease. Improving that attendance was essential for ensuring that New Zealanders of all ethnicities had the opportunity to succeed in the education system. Some progress had been made in recent years: the percentage of Māori and Pacific students who regularly attended classes during the second term of the school year had risen from 33% in 2023 to 44% in 2025. Over that same period, the attendance rate among Asian students had risen from 59 to 70%.

68. **A representative of New Zealand** said that New Zealand remained committed to combating trafficking in persons. The purpose of the Plan of Action against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery, which had run from 2020 to 2025, had been to increase capacity to prevent, detect and disrupt trafficking and protect potential victims. Efforts to implement the Plan had been based on three key pillars: prevention, protection and enforcement. Action taken had included the delivery of training and capacity-building initiatives across New Zealand and in countries throughout South-East Asia and the Pacific region, the development of information on the rights of migrant workers, the provision of a broad range of support for victims of trafficking, the conduct of research to improve understanding of the issue and the introduction of progressive legislative amendments to strengthen protection and enforcement activities. While the Government had not renewed the Plan, the initiatives developed thereunder continued to run. The Government's current focus was on strengthening laws on trafficking in persons in order to make it easier to prosecute the perpetrators and ensure that they received appropriate sentences. To that end, it had proposed amendments to the Crimes Act that would abolish the requirement to prove that coercion or deception occurred when the victim was under 18 years old, explicitly establish that consent was irrelevant when the victim was under 18 or when coercion or deception was

present, criminalize the smuggling of migrants using authentic but fraudulently obtained travel documents and provide greater protection for undercover police investigating cases of child exploitation.

69. **Mr. Kut** said that he would be grateful for the delegation's comments on reports that the family reunification process was currently being affected by a backlog and that Immigration New Zealand consistently refused to grant visas to Palestinians, which, if accurate, was a clear example of discrimination against a specific group.

70. **Mr. Diaby** said that he would welcome information on the State Party's fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular in areas affecting members of the Māori community and individuals of African descent. In view of information that climate migrants were not eligible to apply for the specific visa for individuals from certain Pacific islands, he wished to know whether steps would be taken to lift that restriction given the growing impact of climate change on those islands. It would be useful to learn, too, what policies would be introduced to make it easier for persons affected by climate change to migrate to New Zealand.

71. **Ms. Tebie** said that she would be grateful for a response to her question on the decision to end the compulsory teaching of the Māori language and culture in schools.

72. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he was curious to know what the State Party was doing to monitor the commission of hate crimes. He would welcome a response to his question, put at the previous meeting, on hate as an aggravating circumstance.

73. **A representative of New Zealand** said that the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques had asked the Government to review the adequacy of the country's laws on hate crimes. It had not yet been decided whether those laws needed to be amended.

74. He wished to reassure the Committee that New Zealand had not refused to accept Palestinian migrants; of the 399 applications received from such migrants, 274 had been approved, 91 had been declined and 24 remained under consideration. The number of individuals who would be granted a refugee family support resident visa so that they could be reunited with their relatives in New Zealand had recently been increased from 300 to 600 per year. The requirement for individuals applying for that visa to be in good health had been introduced in order to avoid placing additional burdens on the national health system, which was already under immense strain.

75. **A representative of New Zealand** said that, pursuant to the Education and Training Amendment Act of 2025, Māori language teaching would be made available to any Māori child whose parents had requested it. The number of pupils being taught in Māori was increasing across the country.

76. **A representative of New Zealand** said that Māori approaches and practices had been incorporated into a number of health services for that community. Funding for traditional Māori medicine had risen from \$NZ 1.9 million in 2020 to \$NZ 8.4 million in 2024, leading to a 200% increase in the number of clients using such services and a 105% increase in the number of funded service providers. More than 40% of clients using Māori traditional medicine services did not belong to that community.

77. **A representative of New Zealand** said that New Zealand did not have a specific law on modern slavery, of which there were an estimated 8,000 victims in the country. The Government was thus examining a range of legislative options, including potential amendments to the Crimes Act in order to ensure that that crime was appropriately addressed. Tools for tackling modern slavery had been incorporated into business guidance and government procurement policies, and penalties were imposed on any individuals or businesses who were found to be involved in slavery or related exploitation.

78. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she wished to express her sincere appreciation to the delegation for the rich and constructive dialogue. The State Party had long been a strong supporter of multilateralism and the United Nations human rights treaty body system and must now take special measures to address the systemic and structural inequalities faced by members of the Māori and Pacific communities, ethnic minorities, refugees and migrants.

Such measures should not, however, be conflated with the permanent rights of Indigenous Peoples to own, develop, control and use their lands, territories and resources. Upholding those rights required bold action that was consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi and international law. It was only through such action that the State Party would be able to make genuine and lasting progress and fully harness its diversity.

79. **A representative of New Zealand** said that he would like to thank the Committee for the productive dialogue, which had been a valuable opportunity for New Zealand to reflect on its commitments under the Convention. The long distance travelled by many members of the delegation was testament to the importance the Government attached to the review and its desire to strengthen the United Nations and its human rights system. While New Zealand was proud of the progress it had made since the last review before the Committee, it was conscious that racial discrimination remained an issue and that much more could be done to address it. He wished to thank the New Zealand Human Rights Commission and the various non-governmental organizations who had participated in the process and acknowledge their ongoing commitment to promoting human rights in New Zealand.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.