NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

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COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
NINTH SESSION
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT: GENERAL DEBATE

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF ENERGY OF NEW ZEALAND

HON PETE HODGSON

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr Chairman

I will touch on just three issues which are central to the major themes at this session and also of particular relevance to New Zealand - energy efficiency and conservation; climate change; and the transport of radioactive materials.

New Zealand’s use of energy has been wasteful, polluting and expensive. That’s blunt, but true. It’s also no surprise, given the lack of attention we have paid in my country to energy efficiency. We are predicted to use 13 percent more energy in 2012 than we do now. But unless we get smarter about what we do with it, we’ll still be throwing a lot of it away.

Energy inefficiency is money down the drain. For that reason, my government launched a Draft National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy late last month. It should be finalised by October. The expected benefits are long-term. We anticipate economic benefits equivalent to almost 1 percent of our GDP, we expect measurable improvements in human health and of course we expect environmental gains of consequence. Turning energy efficiency, energy conservation and renewable energy into mainstream solutions is the way to securing a sustainable energy future in New Zealand.

In short, the draft strategy is about developing an energy sector that will support a dynamic economy and improve the quality of our lives. It proposes a target of a 20 percent improvement in energy efficiency by 2012. To reach that target, the draft strategy proposes a wide range of measures, across all sectors of the economy.

Applying the principles to sectors such as transport presents particular challenges. Transport accounts for 40 percent of our consumer energy use. We fly a lot and we have the third highest car ownership rate in the world. There is only one person in the vehicle for many car trips in New Zealand. Our habits, our cities, roads and vehicles seem to conspire against improved energy efficiency.

But we can reduce demand for travel by encouraging attractive alternatives, such as teleworking and ridesharing, and by promoting more energy efficient urban design. We can increase the use of eco-efficient vehicles, with lower emissions from cleaner fuels. So you can see we have a lot to do. When we have done it we will have a stronger economy and we will have come closer to meeting our Kyoto obligations. Which brings us neatly to the second issue I wish to touch on, Climate Change.

Mr Chairman

Every time the various working groups of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change release another of their reports the case on climate change gets clearer and stronger. Climate change is a global issue and as such it demands a global response. National level action is necessary but it needs to be in the wider context of international action. We can’t be effective on our own.
The Kyoto Protocol is therefore a negotiation of vital significance to the global environment. I want to place it on the record that New Zealand continues to support the Kyoto Protocol. We want to see it completed so that developed countries can move to ratification of it. We want to see it enter into force as a balanced package containing a workable international emissions trading system, recognition of forest sinks and strong compliance mechanisms. Only then will we and the international community as a whole have seriously started to tackle the crucial issue of climate change.

The recent announcements by the United States that it does not support the Protocol are viewed by New Zealand as very serious developments. They have implications which will only be clearly understood when we know what Washington proposes. These announcements have caused all countries to take a serious look at the importance they attach to international action on climate change. I must say I am encouraged by the strong expressions of commitment to the Protocol negotiation process that have been forthcoming. To the best of my knowledge not one nation has come out in favour of the United States position. Not one. Many, New Zealand included, have called for Washington to complete its review of the issues and come back to negotiations quickly and fully.

Finally, Mr Chairman, I would like to touch upon the issue of nuclear power and in particular the issue of transport of radioactive materials which will be specifically addressed under the Energy and Transport themes.

Simply put, New Zealand does not want agreed outcomes from other fora to be undercut by Decisions on Energy and on Transport at CSD9, particularly on the issue of transport of radioactive materials. My delegation will therefore be working diligently to protect outcomes achieved in the International Atomic Energy Agency and by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2000. We intend to work closely with other interested delegations to achieve this end.

As many delegations are aware, this is an issue of high importance to New Zealand. My government has been vigorously pursuing better arrangements for the transport of “radioactive materials” in general, including in the Pacific, in respect of which we have been talking to the nuclear transport states.

My government also reiterates its view that nuclear energy is inappropriate for use in New Zealand. It does not accept that nuclear energy is compatible with sustainable development.

Thank you, Mr Chairman