



New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils Inc.

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Registered Charitable Trust No. CC36978

31 October 2012

Ms Gabriella Habtom
Secretary
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
UNOG-OHCHR
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Dear Ms Habtom

CERD 55th Session: Review of New Zealand

The New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils is a civil society organisation which promotes a Treaty-based multicultural society in New Zealand and provides a national voice for migrant and ethnic communities. It comprises 19 local multicultural councils located throughout the country, which organise multicultural activities and provide services to new migrants. It also has a national women's council, a national youth council and a national seniors

The Federation wishes to raise three key issues with the Committee in relation to its consideration of New Zealand's implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination:

- **Article 1 (e): Encouragement of integrationist multiracial organisations**

The Federation is the only significant national civil society organisation with a broad multicultural membership that has as its primary goal the development of a multicultural society. It operates on a shoestring budget, however, with only a small amount (currently NZ\$40,000 per annum) of operational funding provided on an annually reviewable basis by the New Zealand Lotteries Grants Board. This is only sufficient to provide for a part-time Executive Officer and for very limited basic administrative costs. All other activity by the Federation has to be funded on a project by project basis by application to public, community and charitable sources. The Federation would be able to achieve much more if it were able to receive multi-year funding directly from government to cover modest administration and operational costs, including a full time executive director, premises, and policy



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Many peoples together for one Nation

analysis and advocacy capability. We submit that this would be consistent with the government's obligation under the Convention to encourage integrationist and multiracial organisations.

- **Article 5 (e) (i): The right to work**

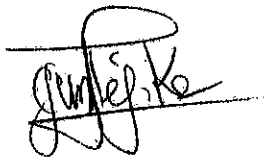
There is considerable research that indicates that one of the major forms of discrimination that migrants and ethnic minorities face in New Zealand is in relation to employment. This is also the experience of our members. Employment discrimination takes a number of forms. One significant form is that many overseas professional qualifications are not recognised by New Zealand professional bodies, meaning that migrants are employed (if they achieve employment) in work below their level of qualification. Although we recognise the need for registered qualifications, we believe that this is used by some professional and registration bodies to protect their members from competition by migrants despite the need for these skills. We submit that this represents discrimination in terms of the right to work under Article 5 (e) (i) of the Convention.

- **Article 6: Effective protection and remedies**

The Federation is concerned that the Human Rights Amendment Bill currently before Parliament will abolish the designation of Race Relations Commissioner and make the role subject to the direction of the Chief Human Rights Commissioner. The Office of the Race Relations Conciliator was established in 1972 in order for New Zealand to comply with the Convention, and was merged with the Human Rights Commission in 2002. Assurances were given by the government at the time to ethnic communities, including the Federation, that this merger would not affect the role or independence of the position of Race Relations Commissioner, which replaced that of Race Relations Conciliator. The present amending legislation will in our view be a breach of that assurance and will reduce the visibility, accessibility and independence of the position. We consider that this will compromise the government's obligation under Article 6 of the Convention to provide effective protection and remedies to persons experiencing racial discrimination.

We trust that you will consider these three issues of concern to us in your forthcoming examination of New Zealand. We regret we will not be able to attend the review in Geneva due to financial constraints. We thank you for the excellent work that you do in assisting governments to comply fully with the Convention and wish you all the best in your continuing endeavours.

Yours sincerely



Tayo Agunlejika
President