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Office of Hon Dr Nick Smith

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Climate Change Issues

Wednesday 8 December 2010

New Zealand National Statement COP16: Cancun, Mexico

First let me acknowledge our generous hosts, the people of Mexico.

Madam President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

New Zealand is committed to playing a constructive role in these negotiations to help secure a global, legally-binding and comprehensive agreement on climate change.

We come to this conference committed to meeting our Kyoto commitments.

We are the first country outside of Europe to have successfully introduced an emissions trading scheme.

73% of our electricity comes from renewables and our policy is 90% by 2025.

We have a difficult challenge with half our emissions coming from agriculture. That is why in Copenhagen we launched the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases and why we welcome the 29 countries who have joined us.

We need to resolve how we feed a growing global population without adding to emissions and the problems of climate change.

The other major challenge for New Zealand is our large estate of plantation forestry.

We therefore welcome the progress being made towards workable accounting rules that have environmental integrity. New Zealand's emissions are so sensitive to variations in forestry rules that we cannot commit to a specific future target until they are clear.

As a developed nation New Zealand has a responsibility to assist our Pacific Island neighbours who are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

That is why we have refocused our Overseas Development Aid programme on the Pacific and are investing in a number of climate change-related projects such as cyclone-resistant buildings in the Cook Islands, upgraded jetties in Vanuatu and solar power support for Tonga.

To make progress we need to recognise the world has changed from that of the 1990s. An agreement that focuses only on 27% of global emissions will not resolve climate change. The foundations for the way forward have been paved by the Copenhagen Accord with developed country emission-reduction targets, mitigation actions from developing countries and a new and substantial financial support package.

New Zealand is well aware that the issue of a second commitment period is one of the most sensitive issues in this negotiation. While our offer to cut New Zealand emissions understandably has a number of conditions attached to it, New Zealand has no objection in principle to a second commitment period.

New Zealand has also sought to open a dialogue on fossil fuel subsidies. It is ironic that while we try and design pricing instruments to recognise the environmental cost of emissions, the world spends hundreds of billions of dollars a year subsidising fossil fuels and pollution. If we are serious about addressing climate change in the most efficient way, we need to be discussing a phase out of such support.

New Zealand is a small developed country determined to do its fair share on climate change and to help ensure these negotiations come to a successful conclusion.

We owe it to future generations to make it happen.