**Oral Statement: National Iwi Chairs Forum (Pou Tikanga) and the University of Auckland’s Aotearoa Centre for Indigenous Peoples and the Law**

**Delivered by Claire Charters**

**Topic: Declaration Implementation: Dialogue with SRIP, EMRIP, PFII and treaty bodies**

**16 July 2025**

Tēnā koutou kātoa.

I speak on behalf of Pou Tikanga of the National Tribal Nations’ Chairs Forum of New Zealand and the Aotearoa Centre for Indigenous Peoples and the Law.

The National Tribal Nations’ Chairs Forum is made up of leaders from over 80 Māori nations who carry mandates from their peoples.

I have 3 points:

* First, the current Government has rejected any initiative to develop a national action plan on the Declaration and coalition partners have rejected the Declaration.
* Second, despite this, implementation of the Declaration remains a priority for the National Tribal Nations Chairs’ Forum, specific tribal nations and Māori representative bodies. We pursue this in a various ways, including by our participation in international fora such as this and before human rights treaty bodies. We are very grateful for your support. We also raise the Declaration in courts at the highest level, before the Waitangi Tribunal and in political contexts.
* Finally, we note again the Deputy Prime Minister’s rejection of the Special Rapporteur’s “letter of allegation” requesting New Zealand’s response to concerns he has heard from Māori. The Deputy Prime Minister misunderstood the nature of an allegation letter, which simply asks states to respond to information they have heard. The Deputy Prime Minister described the Special Rapporteur’s letter as offensive and an affront to New Zealand’s sovereignty, illustrating the Deputy Prime Minister’s ignorance of and disrespect for the international human rights order.

We respectfully request the Special Rapporteur, the Expert Mechanism, the Permanent Forum and human rights treaty bodies to maintain their oversight of New Zealand’s ongoing breaches of the Declaration. In particular, we invite the Expert Mechanism to repeat its request for country engagement with New Zealand.

In the interim, we hope to be in a position to host the Special Rapporteur, members of the Permanent Forum and the Expert Mechanism to undertake a collective informal academic visit to Aotearoa this year.

Tēnā koutou kātoa.