

EMRIP

13th session

30 November to 4 December 2020

Statement of the Independent Iwi Monitoring Mechanism
Delivered by: Margaret Mutu (Chair)

Greetings to all participants.

This statement addresses 6 of EMRIP'S questions. Further information is provided in our annual report.

On the **main challenges**.

While there was some government engagement with Māori, Māori were not sufficiently involved in key decisions. A Tiriti-compliant systems change is needed to enable Māori to exercise authority and lead solutions, and for the state to share power and resources.

On the impact on **economic, social and cultural life**.

Māori are hit harder in recessions, and are slower to recover. Many of us work in vulnerable industries, such as tourism and hospitality – where Māori women in particular have been severely impacted. Education, food security, access to medicines, phone and internet have been key areas of concern.

Cultural impacts have also been significant. We have adapted our own laws and customary practices, for example, by changing funeral protocols. Yet government decisions – such as funeral restrictions – wrongly assumed that government has authority to make decisions regarding our laws.

On the impact on **those with disabilities**.

COVID-19 highlighted the government's inability to disseminate information in disability-specific formats. There were accessibility issues with the government's COVID-19 website and app. Māori disabled-led organisations addressed these issues.

On **good practices** in alleviating the effects of COVID-19.

In the past, Māori suffered disproportionately from pandemics and so, when COVID-19 came to Aotearoa, Māori mobilised quickly: we delivered food and hygiene supplies; checked on elders; and established checkpoints to monitor tribal borders. The National Iwi Chairs Forum established a Pandemic Response Group to coordinate and support responses and engage with government.

These acts of self-determination were needed to keep Māori safe, and the whole community benefitted. Government would not have been able to reach Māori without the support of Māori organisations.

Some positive practices from government were providing financial support to Māori initiatives, and meeting regularly with the National Iwi Chairs Forum.

On the protection of rights **post COVID-19**.

The UN Declaration has been absent from the government's response to COVID-19. Progress towards developing a national action plan for the Declaration has stalled, yet a Declaration plan could have greatly assisted a more coordinated, Tiriti-based response.

Finally, what do **indigenous persons with disabilities need** to help them overcome this crisis.

COVID-19 has contributed to a rise in mental illness. Māori people with experience of mental illness have proposed changes that will significantly improve services, for example, by including the extended family at all levels of services and support.

Thank you Mr/Madam Chair.