



Dan Eaton National affairs editor - The Press | Saturday, 01 November 2008

## Norway-style role mooted

**A Labour-led government would seek to imitate Norway by boosting New Zealand's role in international conflict resolution.**

Senior Cabinet minister Phil Goff announced the plan yesterday as part of Labour's foreign affairs policy.

The move has been described by Beehive officials as a bid to create a point of difference with National.

Under the leadership of John Key, National has adopted the core tenets of Labour's "independent" foreign policy, including a pledge to retain New Zealand's anti-nuclear stance.

Goff said Labour would look to significantly expand the country's capacity to help resolve intra-state conflict, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mfat) instructed to work closely with non-government organisations and academics in New Zealand.

"New Zealand has a reputation as a country which thinks independently and makes a strong contribution in areas like peacekeeping, disarmament, inter-faith dialogue and development assistance," Goff said.

"We can leverage off this to expand our contribution to conflict resolution."

An eight-page policy document noted New Zealand's experience in peacekeeping in Afghanistan, East Timor, Bougainville, the Solomon Islands and Tonga.

Goff said Mfat would assemble conflict resolution teams, made up of diplomats, academics and other groups around New Zealand, whose services would be offered to the United Nations.

"We will also look to developing formally a list of New Zealanders with skills and mana for assignments as personal envoys to put forward to the United Nations Secretary-General," he said.

Goff said the idea was to carve out a role similar to Norway's.

"New Zealand has long admired the work Norway has done in this area and we will draw on their experience," he said.

"Norway, like New Zealand, is a small country and one with which we have already worked closely in many areas."

The Government's May Budget gave Mfat an extra \$621 million spread over five years an annual increase of more than a third over current levels. Much of the money was to be used in expanding New Zealand's presence abroad. At least some of the additional money is likely to be withdrawn as a result of the world economic turmoil.

Labour has said it will review spending plans across a range of government agencies, including Mfat.

National has pledged to "turn the tap off" on at least \$270 million of the additional Mfat funds.

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