

The presentation of this title was made by the CPAFFC Vice President Li Xiaolin, at a special ceremony held for Mr Tauroa and Professor Bill Willmott in Beijing on 13 September.

Your Excellency Mr. John McKinnon,
New Zealand Ambassador to China,
Respected Prof. Bill Willmott,
Respected Mr. Hiwi Tauroa,
Respected guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good Evening!

It is with great pleasure that we gather here today, together with so many New Zealand friends both coming from New Zealand and working or staying in Beijing as well as Chinese and foreign friends in China to confer the title of "Friendship Ambassador" upon two people from New Zealand. They are: Prof. Bill Willmott, immediate past president of New Zealand China Friendship Society and Mr. Hiwi Tauroa, founder and President of NZ Maori China Friendship Society.

Friendship Ambassador is an honorary title conferred by CPAFFC upon those international friends who not only enjoy high prestige at home, but more importantly are long devoted to the cause of friendship, have worked tirelessly to help their own people correctly understand China, to foster and strengthen the friendship between the two peoples, and made significant contributions towards such cause.

Prof. Bill Willmott and Mr. Hiwi Tauroa are people who command such quality and enjoy such respect. With profound sentiments towards China and the Chinese people, both of them have, for so many years, made tremendous efforts to enhance the friendship between New Zealand and China, and made valuable contributions to the mutual understanding and friendship between our two peoples.

Prof. Willmott was born in the Chinese city of Chengdu and speaks fluent Chinese. Ever since he migrated to New Zealand from Canada in 1973, he joined the New Zealand China Friendship Society and served as its branch president and national president until his retirement only a couple of months ago. For a long time, the New Zealand China Friendship Society under his leadership has been a most active friendly organization, engaging in all kinds of activities. Prof. Willmott, through his books, lectures and speeches, helped the New Zealand people to better understand China.

With activities like lectures, exhibitions, showing Chinese movies, organizing NZ people to visit China and hosting Chinese delegations, the NZ China Friendship Society helped our two peoples get to know each other further. Despite of its financial difficulties, NZCFS donated money many times to the Shandan Beilie School which was personally founded by an old friend of the Chinese People Mr. Rewi Alley.

They not only sent NZ volunteers to teach in that school but also sponsored teachers from Gansu Province to study in NZ. Furthermore, they also made many donations to the Gung Ho Cooperatives as well as to the Friendship Museum of CPAFFC. All this was done in the spirit of Rewi Alley's internationalism.

Mr. Hiwi Tauroa was a secondary school teacher in the early stage of his career. In 1968, he became a secondary school principal, the first Maori to take such a position. He later served as a Human Rights Commissioner, UN Trust Board for indigenous Peoples, participated in several UN forums in Geneva, has held positions in Auckland College of Education, NZ Mental Health Foundation, NZ Council for Educational Research, NZ broadcasting, sports and other agencies.

Being highly respected by the NZ Maori people, he has long devoted himself to the cause of friendship between our two peoples. In 1996, he established the NZ Maori China Friendship Society and served as its president ever since. For many times, he personally led Maori delegations to visit China and hosted Chinese delegations visiting NZ. Mr. Hiwi Tauroa also helped the Chinese Embassy to NZ in its work and made much effort in motivating the Maori people to learn Chinese.

Prof. Willmott and Mr. Hiwi Tauroa are fully entitled to the honor of "Friendship Ambassador." I hereby wish them further contributions to the cause of friendship between China and New Zealand in the years to come.

Now, please allow me, on behalf of Mr. Chen Haosu, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries to confer the title of "Friendship Ambassador" upon Prof. Bill Willmott and Mr. Hiwi Tauroa.