

**A SPEECH BY THE MAYOR OF WELLINGTON
KERRY PRENDERGAST
AT THE SISTER CITIES 25TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE
MICHAEL FOWLER CENTRE, WELLINGTON**

**WEDNESDAY, 10 MAY 2006
AT 9AM**

***Acknowledgement: Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Helen Clark,
Vice President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with
Foreign Countries Madam Li Xiaolin , Sister Cities International
president Sherman Banks, foreign dignitaries, fellow Mayors and
councillors, ladies and gentlemen.***

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga iwi, tena koutou katoa

Good morning and welcome to Wellington.

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to the Capital for the Sister Cities 25th Anniversary Conference and may I extend an especially warm welcome to those of you from overseas ... from Wellington's sister cities and beyond. We are delighted to have you here in our city.

I would also like to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the Worldwide Sister Cities movement.

Anniversaries, I think, are always a good time to reflect on the past and look to the future. And I am sure there will be a lot of that over the next few days as we share experiences and form new friendships and alliances.

While this conference has special significance to us all here today, the symbolism goes much deeper for Wellington. Today we are formalising our sister city arrangement with Beijing by signing a formal agreement.

The signing of such an agreement is a milestone for any city, and in formalising this relationship today we recognise and honour a unique relationship between the peoples of our two cities. I am very much looking forward to it.

Poet Robert Southey once said:

*“No distance of place or lapse of time can lessen
the friendship of those who are thoroughly
persuaded of each other’s worth.”*

For Wellington those words underpin our sister city relationships. The foundation of all our sister city relationships is friendship. And there is no lapse of time or distance of place that can lessen that friendship.

As the world gets seemingly smaller, global cooperation becomes a lot more important. We have much to learn from each other and much to understand about each others cultures. Sister city relationships break down borders, and allow us to build productive and mutually beneficial international relationships.

They add a new dimension to a city and open many new doors to the citizens of each community. Over the years there have been many exchanges between Wellington and our sister cities, Xiamen, Beijing, Sakai, Harrogate and Hania.

Each exchange has seen the development of new friendships, closer bonds and benefits that extend beyond the economic and cultural.

This weekend I will be embarking on a pilgrimage to Crete, and Hania, a historical sister city of Wellington in Crete, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Crete.

Hundreds of New Zealanders lost their lives in the Battle of Crete, but strong enduring friendships were formed with the Cretans who helped our soldiers before, during and after the invasion of their homeland by the Germans.

That strong friendship and bond remains today and it is an honour and privilege to be part of this pilgrimage.

Once again it is my pleasure to welcome you to Wellington. I invite you to enjoy our wonderful city and to make yourselves at home. There is much to see and do in the Arts and Cultural Capital of New Zealand. I know you will have a fantastic time.

May the warmth and hospitality of the people of Wellington shine on you during the next few days, and leave you with lasting memories of one of the best little cities in the world.

Thank you.