

Helen Clark



"Grounded in international human rights, gender equality doesn't just improve the lives of individual women, girls, and their families; it makes economic sense, strengthens democracy, and enables long-term sustainable progress."

Member of The Elders; Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and head of the UN Development Programme; Co-Chair of the WHO Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response; an advocate for multilateralism and nuclear disarmament.

- First elected to New Zealand Parliament, 1981
- First elected woman Prime Minister of New Zealand, 1999
- Served three consecutive terms in office as PM, 1999-2008
- First woman appointed to run UN Development Programme (UNDP), 2009-2017
- Appointed Co-Chair of Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response, 2020
- Joins The Elders, 2023

Helen Clark was Prime Minister of New Zealand for three successive terms from 1999–2008.

Throughout her tenure as Prime Minister and as a Member of Parliament over 27 years, Helen Clark engaged widely in policy development and advocacy across the international, economic, social, environmental, and cultural spheres. She advocated strongly for New Zealand's comprehensive programme on sustainability and for tackling the problems of climate change.

She was an active leader of her country's foreign relations, engaging in a wide range of international issues.

In April 2009, Helen Clark became Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She was the first woman to lead the organisation, and served two terms there. At the same time, she was also Chair of the United Nations Development Group, a committee consisting of all UN funds, programmes, agencies, and departments working on development issues. As Administrator, she led UNDP to be ranked the most transparent global development organisation. She completed her tenure in 2017.

Helen Clark came to the role of Prime Minister after an extensive parliamentary and ministerial career. Prior to being elected to the New Zealand Parliament in 1981, Helen Clark taught in the Political Studies Department of the University of Auckland, from which she earlier graduated with her BA and MA (Hons) degrees.

Helen continues to be a strong voice for sustainable development, climate action, gender equality and women's leadership, peace and justice, and action on pressing global health issues. In July 2020, she was appointed by the Director-General of the World Health Organisation as a Co-Chair of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, called for by the World Health Assembly, which reported in May 2021. She chairs the boards of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, and other public good organisations and initiatives and is a board member of others.