The teams competing in the Rugby World Cup 2011 competition will be welcomed to New Zealand with a series of marae-based and civic events in early September.

Tournament organizer Rugby New Zealand 2011 today confirmed arrangements for the Official Team Welcomes for each of the 20 participating teams at the event.

Welcomes take place between September 1 and 8 and involve 12 marae and eight civic ceremonies around the country. A marae is a Maori sacred meeting place.

Japan will be the first team welcomed on September 1 at Aotea Square in Auckland and Russia, the last, at Blenheim's Omaka Marae on September 8.

Rugby New Zealand 2011 team services manager Michelle Hooper said the welcomes would uniquely New Zealand flavored.

"They will combine local cultural elements and distinctive regional hospitality to ensure teams begin their stay here in a memorable way."

The location of each welcome has been determined by the region the team will first stay in, said Hooper.

"The regions have really embraced this concept, have been central to planning and are thrilled about being the first to welcome the teams to New Zealand and the opportunity it provides to showcase themselves to the world."

Team Welcome Ceremonies
Japan - Auckland, Aotea Square; Sept 1

Romania - Ashburton Events Centre; Sept 2

Namibia - Gisborne Te Poho o Rawiri Marae; Sept 3

France - Auckland Orakei Marae, Bastion Point; Sept 3

Italy - Nelson Whakatau Marae; Sept 3

New Zealand - Auckland, Aotea Square; Sept 3

**USA - Whanganui Putiki Marae; Sept 4**

Argentina - Dunedin Town Hall; Sept 4

Ireland - Queenstown, Skyline; Sept 4

Wales - Wellington Takapuwahia Marae, Porirua; Sept 4

South Africa - Wellington Te Raukura; Sept 5

**Canada - Northland Waitangi, Paihia; Sept 5**

Tonga - Auckland Papakura Marae, Papakura; Sept 6

Georgia - Queenstown, Skyline; Sept 6

Fiji - Tauranga, Huria Marae; Sept 6

Australia - Auckland, Aotea Square; Sept 6

England - Dunedin Town Hall; Sept 6

Samoa - Rotorua Ohinemutu; Sept 8

Scotland - Invercargill Te Rau Aroha Marae; Sept 8

Russia - Blenheim Omaka Marae; Sept 8