



REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

Statement to be delivered by

Honorable Mr. Amberoti Nikora

Minister of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development

Of the Republic of Kiribati

At the occasion of the Opening of the High Level Segment of COP 17/CMP 7

*Theme: **Working Together: Saving Tomorrow Today***

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Madam President,
Excellencies,
UN Secretary General,
Executive Secretary of UNFCCC,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Kam na bane ni mauri! Greetings to you all!

I am truly honored in joining you on this occasion and in addressing this 17th Conference of Parties and the 7th Session of the Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

At the outset (Madam President) allow me to join those others who have done so before me in thanking you on behalf of the Government and the People of the Republic of Kiribati, and your Government and the people of Republic of South Africa for hosting this Conference and also to congratulate you on your election as the President of COP 17/ CMP 7. I want to acknowledge the excellent hospitality and the generous courtesies accorded to my delegation since our arrival here in Durban. I wish also to commend the UNFCCC Executive Secretary and her staff for working tirelessly in ensuring the smooth facilitation of this very important Conference.

Let me begin my address by applauding to the meaningful theme chosen for the Conference - *Working together: saving tomorrow today.*

It is quite appropriate that this conference is held here in South Africa, the home of one of the greatest visionaries of our time the great Xhosa, Madiba Nelson Mandela whose struggles somewhat resemble those which we face – as small island states in this greatest moral challenge that we face today.

Madame President, my country is already facing the impacts of climate change - impacts which we can expect from the current science to become worse and which will ultimately lead to our demise as a nation, people and culture. It is this very scenario that we hope this conference can help avoid if we agree to a balanced outcome that will be legally binding on all emission activities. The science is clear – current levels of emissions threaten our very existence on this planet.

Last year in Cancun and at past conferences; my government through the Head of State has consistently voiced the alarm to the global community to wake up to the grave situation currently faced by my country, a situation shared by other Small Islands Developing States.

While recognizing that all countries are vulnerable, and all are facing similar catastrophic impacts of climate change, it is only right to emphasize here that the urgency of the climate change challenge cannot be categorized similarly for all countries.

The seriousness of these impacts are expected to worsen and there are already communities who no longer are able to remain in their homes.

In Kiribati, unfortunately, we lack the land space and resources to cope with these impacts. I fear that the so-called rhetoric that climate change will eventually lead to our demise as Island states will in fact become a reality.

Madame President

No matter where you are, you will not escape the impacts of climate change.

I want to appeal to this conference to take heed of the real essence of the theme for this conference, *Working together – saving tomorrow today*, in the context of today's realities and severe adversities. I say this now because I fully believe that this conference can be a true turning point in the global debate on climate change. It is today that we need to ratchet up our efforts, rather than later. Our survival is at stake and it cannot wait any longer.

We, *on the frontlines of climate change*, are already experiencing the adversities of climate change. We will do everything we can to raise these concerns in this process;

First and foremost; we need to see agreement on the second commitment period for **the Kyoto Protocol** with ambitious mitigation targets and reliable rules for both developed and developing country parties.

The current emission reduction pledges by developed countries already fall short of the cuts required to ensure a future safe planet.

Therefore, I strongly urge all developed country Parties to agree to the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol and to set more ambitious targets for emissions reductions.

The developed countries, who are not parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and emerging economies, must also see themselves as critical pillars of building a safer environment. I believe a way has to be found and agreed upon, here in Durban that paves the way to construct a **new protocol under Convention that includes all non-Kyoto parties.**

I want to reiterate that not achieving ambitious agreements here in Durban will eventually lead to the demise of Island States such as Kiribati. This is a scenario that is unthinkable for me, as I am sure would be the case for you, if our situation were to be reversed.

Madame President, in Cancun, the **Green Climate Fund** was established with the intention to act as a means to facilitate the global process of mitigating and adapting to climate change, particularly in developing countries. The need for this fund is now more pressing especially for those most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of Climate Change. One year has passed and my country is still waiting with high expectations that this fund and its arrangements will become the basis to begin addressing the issues in relation to climate change financing. Currently we have difficulty accessing funds for our mitigation and adaptation programs, and overall the flow of funds is incredibly slow.

I, as others representing the most vulnerable countries that spoke before me, came to Durban with high hopes that Durban will spark the initial stage of operationalizing of the Green Climate Fund.

The **loss and damage** agenda within this process is a moral imperative. I need not reiterate the extent of the adverse impacts of climate change in my country, but I want to stress how essential it is to have an international mechanism on loss and damage to address the level of loss and damage that our islands face.

I strongly believe that the theme of this conference holds the key to unravel the deadlocks on these issues. More importantly, I hope to return home from this Durban Conference in the full confidence, that these are not empty wishes but that they have some substance. We all have the responsibility to make this a reality. We owe it to future generations to make this a reality.

Madam President, climate change is a global challenge and requires collaborative efforts from all fronts and all peoples. Taiwan has a lot to contribute to this global challenge and it is in this connection that I voice the support of my country to accept Taiwan into the UNFCCC process so that it can be a part of the international discussions to understand the consequences of this calamity and more importantly to offer what it can to combat the adverse effects of climate change.

Madam President,

The Science is very clear on the impacts, you, and indeed the world has heard of the experiences that World leaders have shared when they visited my country; the UNSG indeed felt this when he spoke to that poor, innocent child in my country.

I only hope that the rest of you can have the opportunity to come and listen to the pleas of our young children for yourselves before it's too late.

This conference surely can be the time to working together to guarantee the survival of my people and my young generations today.

I thank you Madam President, and in closing let me share with you and all the distinguished delegates to this conference our traditional Kiribati blessings of Te Mauri (health) Te Raoi (peace) ao Te Tabomoa (prosperity) as we deliberate on this greatest responsibility facing our shared home and planet.