

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI**

**HIS EXCELLENCY BERETITENTI ANOTE TONG**

*On the Occasion of the Leaders Event of COP 21*

*Paris, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015*

His Excellency President Hollande

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies & Gentlemen

1

I bring to you all very warm greetings from the people of Kiribati on whose behalf I am privileged to address this Event.

**“KAM NA BANE NI MAURI” (MAY WE ALL BE BLESSED WITH GOOD HEALTH)**

I wish to begin by reiterating our deepest condolences to you Mr President, to the Government and people of France over the tragic loss of lives from the horrific and barbaric act of terrorism on 13 November here in Paris, and to all others who have suffered from terrorism around the globe. The fact that we are all here today is testament to the valiant resolve of your government and that of your people to not let such isolated acts of violence triumph over normalcy. Furthermore, it is my sincere hope that our presence here signals our solidarity as a global community with you Mr President and through you to your people.

2

## **Excellency's, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Today we all stand in unity with France against terrorism, however, these next few days will determine whether or not we can remain united against a threat that poses a danger to all of us if in varying degrees especially for those of us at the frontline of climate change. It is indeed encouraging to note the eloquent contributions that have and are being made to address climate change, the greatest challenge of all time which if not addressed now, may well be the last and final challenge for all of humanity.

The science is very clear and we have gone past debating the technicalities of climate change – that should not be the focus of this forum nor should it be the obstacle to doing what is right and what is just for the future of this planet our one and only home and most importantly for our future generation. Rather the question now should be, are we ready to make the necessary sacrifices and meaningful commitments to remedy the damages that we have inflicted and in doing so give a chance to all those whose homes and lives are

3

being destroyed by the progressive onslaught of climate change?

## **Excellency's, Ladies and Gentlemen**

That is the moral question that should guide our dialogue over the next few days. It is my strong belief that for any measure of success to be achieved here in Paris, we must approach these few days as global leaders and citizens; not bring our national political agendas to a global issue such as climate change. The future of people, men, women and children, whole cultures, whole communities, villages, cities and nations hangs in the balance even NOW as we deliberate and we remain uncertain on whether or not we will reach a consensus on the way forward.

For those of us whose survival is at stake, our plea is very simple. Let us give credence to our pledges, our eloquent contributions and let us not pay lip service to an issue that

4

demands immediate and urgent action. Let us have a legally binding agreement which if not perfect will at the very least guarantee that future generations in each of our nations will continue to have a home as is their right. A legally binding agreement that is progressive and will avert the disaster that we are heading directly into. Not only that, but the resources that have been pledged and are to be secured from private and other sources, are made readily accessible to those who need them the most.

It is against this background that I have issued a call for a global moratorium on new investments on coal mines as endorsed by my fellow Pacific Leaders and I invite you all to join in this call. For if we are to define one actionable step towards the reduction of gas emissions, a moratorium on new coal mines and the extension of existing coal mines would be the simplest and the one that makes the most economic and financial sense. With the technological advances in clean and renewable energy that are now becoming more and more affordable, it is very achievable.

5

For what we do in our national boundaries, whether we like or not your excessive emissions become ours, has ripple impacts on the rest of the world. We have a responsibility, as global citizens of this one global community, to look out for each other and I take this opportunity to put on record and that of my people's appreciation to Fiji who has risen to this moral challenge and reached out to Kiribati and Tuvalu.

### **Excellency's, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let us listen to the voices of our people, the public actions, marches that have been organized in solidarity against Climate Change. Equally important, let us listen to our conscience – we all have one. For our people have spoken. Do we forsake them to satisfy the interests of a very few, or do we take a stand now as global and moral leaders?

For our presence here to have meaning, the outcomes must be inclusive, just and leave no one, no nation behind including those voiceless in international affairs such as countries like Taiwan, Tokelau to name a few, who despite not being part of global forums

6

such as this have demonstrated their obligation towards the preservation of this planet. We all have a role and a duty to play in regards this critical issue – not only as leaders but as individual citizens of this global community.

**Mr. President**

As chair of this forum, I commend your leadership and your initiative. You have taken the time to listen to all the divergent voices and most importantly you have resolved to overcome whatever hurdles that stand in the way of a successful outcome. It is now up to us to support you so that when we leave your beautiful city, we do so with the knowledge and the satisfaction that we have done all we can for our people.

For it is not about science, it is not about economics, it is about the survival of this Planet – of PEOPLE, men, women and children, whole communities, cities and nations. COP 21 should be the turning point that underscores ALL are protected and no-one is left behind.

7

We owe that duty of care to our people, to our children, our grandchildren and their children.

Let me conclude by sharing with you all our traditional Kiribati blessings of Te Mauri, Te Raoi, ao Te Tabomoa. May health peace and prosperity be with us all.

Thank you.