



REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

Statement by

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
UNFCCC Executive Secretary
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring to you all very warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, young and old, the Government and my President, His Excellency Anote Tong on whose behalf I am privileged to address this august body. In Kiribati we start all addresses by conferring blessings of peace and security on all those present so I would like to begin by saying to you all:

“KAM NA BANE NI MAURI”

Mr President,

I wish to take this opportunity to express my delegation's and my own, deep appreciation to our gracious hosts, the Government and people of Poland for the warm hospitality we all have been accorded since our arrival in your beautiful country and for the meticulous arrangements to ensure the successful conduct of our meeting here in Warsaw.

Mr President,

I also wish to echo the sentiments conveyed by previous speakers in congratulating you Mr President on assuming the Presidency of this 19th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. I am confident that under your able stewardship, our work towards improving the security and quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular those who are the most vulnerable to climate change will move to new levels of international political commitment and support in an inclusive and transparent manner. Kiribati fully supports you in this important task.

Mr. President,

I also want to commend the untiring commitment and work of our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon on the issue of climate change and the plight of the most vulnerable... those living on the front line of the climate challenge which includes my own country. The people of my country and of our region reiterate our deep gratitude for the Secretary General's personal commitment in this regard. Under the UN SG leadership, Kiribati also expects the upcoming World Leaders Summit and the Global Conference on SIDS to inform the work of the ADP process with a guarantee of a new, ambitious and legally binding climate change protocol by 2015 that is centered on saving the most vulnerable countries like Kiribati and our global planet.

Mr President,

The challenges facing us as we gather again for this 19th session of COP here in Warsaw are even greater and urgent than when we met a year ago. Security challenges posed by climate change continue to undermine our efforts, the global family of nations to achieve sustainable development...our efforts as a global community to work towards peace and security. For some of us, it is a plea for basic survival. As such, I also wished to support and align my statement with those made by Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China, Nepal on behalf of Least Developed Countries and Nauru on behalf of Alliance of Small Island Developing States.

Mr President,

The tragic event facing the people of the Philippines following super typhoon Haiyan... clearly demonstrate the magnitude of the calamity facing us as we meet in Warsaw. We join previous speakers in conveying to the people and Government of the Philippines, and to those who lost loved ones, that we in Kiribati... join you in prayer during these extremely sad and difficult times.

Mr. President,

What is happening in the Philippines is the reality of climate change. This reminds us of the important work we urgently need and must do now. We gather here in Warsaw, small island developing states, developing and developed states, small, medium sized and big countries... because we have a common purpose... and a shared responsibility for our planet... to work together to address and find global concrete solution for the greatest challenge facing us with climate change.

Mr President,

Kiribati has and will again highlight that this is a critical issue for the survival of our people and indeed for all of humanity. Scientists tell us that calamity awaits and not just for those of us on low-lying islands. What we are experiencing now on these low-lying atolls is an early warning of what will happen further down the line for everyone. No one will be spared. We cannot continue to abuse our planet in this way. For the future we want for our children and grandchildren, we need leadership. We need collective action. We need commitment. We need Goodwill...NOW at COP19.

Mr President,

My delegation was very much touched by the opening session program showcasing the situation and the dream of our children living in the other Poland, a village in Kiribati. This means a lot to us, it demonstrates a message of hope that under your presidency and chairmanship - the focus of COP 19 is “to have a better and safer future for our children that is inclusive and transparent” not only in Kiribati and Poland and around the world.”

Mr President,

While we welcome the progress achieved so far under the UNFCCC process...it still is NOT ENOUGH to ensure the survival of our people and our planet. The recent release of the IPCC 5th Assessment Report (AR5)–reaffirms what we already know... and what we are already experiencing on the ground. It reconfirms the need to ask even harder questions for us in Kiribati - what lies beyond adaptation? What can be done if we can no longer adapt to climate change? **How can we continue to adapt, when our survival is at stake??**

Mr President,

Kiribati calls for equal importance to be given to both mitigation and adaptation measures through balanced resource allocation. The delivery of international

adaptation finance and resources are taking much too long. The Green Climate Fund needs to be operationalized and resourced as SOON as possible so it can start its operations by the end of 2014. Kiribati calls for improved access in particular for SIDS and LDCs, especially through direct access. We also call on our partners from developed countries to announce and pledge scaled-up climate finance for the years to come as part of the outcomes here in Warsaw, including also the need to increase the level of mitigation commitments and ambitions.

Mr. President,

Kiribati is very concerned with the current lack of ambition to reduce greenhouse gases. The inadequate support for adaptation for SIDS means increased vulnerabilities, high exposure to external shocks and increasing adverse effects of climate change. The establishment of an international mechanism on Loss and Damage is crucial and must be in place now here in this meeting as we have decided in Doha. For countries like Kiribati, loss and damage can no longer be avoided through mitigation nor can be avoided through adaptation. In this regard, loss and damage must be treated with the urgency it demands.

Mr. President,

Time is running out for us. Climate change poses the most urgent security challenge for Kiribati... now. We are in the front line of all this. It is already

causing severe coastal erosions, involuntary displacement of villages, decrease in food and water security, and more importantly, has become a survival issue. These impacts are putting enormous pressure on domestic institutions, the national budget, the families and the sense of well-being of the people. These will continue to be exacerbated in the foreseeable future.

Mr. President,

We cannot continue to stand on the side-lines and wait for others to deliver. In Kiribati, we are taking charge of our situation and moving forward with our mitigation and adaptation strategies. We are now working directly with our partners on this like Australia, EU and Taiwan to implement our national adaptation priorities.

Mr President,

While we are taking adaptation measures to ensure that Kiribati remains habitable for as long as possible, prudence demands that we prepare for a long term future for our people. Kiribati has taken the position that it would be irresponsible to acknowledge what we are experiencing on the ground and not do anything to prepare our people and communities for eventual migration, in circumstances that permit them to migrate with dignity. We must prepare our

people for this eventuality. That said relocation will always be viewed as an option of last resort.

So what are we doing Mr President? Let me share a few of the things that we are doing in Kiribati.

We are buying land offshore to enhance food security for our people. We are also working on improving the education and the skills of our people to a level where they are able to compete for jobs in the international labour market. We have facilitated overseas employment and permanent emigration opportunities for our people. These are in line with Government's policy on relocation and migration with dignity. We want our people to have the option to MIGRATE WITH DIGNITY... so they can contribute meaningfully to their new homes rather than "climate refugees".

We are exploring long term survivability and self-reliance options that ensures sustainability of culture, heritage and identity of the Kiribati people. We are looking at the various options available to a "disappearing" state, the legalities and the precedents.

Mr President,

We can only do so much, WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE. Much more needs to be done. Because of climate change, our future as a nation and as people is uncertain. Like many others here in this room. We present a whole new security challenge. We also bring a whole new meaning to human rights and the right to a secure future? Climate change has raised a new dimension of human rights, the right to clean drinking water, the right to education, the right to survival. It has also brought a new dimension to the definition of the word “refugee”.

Mr President,

As we meet this time in Warsaw for COP 19, we challenge all delegations to focus on the urgent need to address the urgent security implications of climate change, including violation of territorial integrity, existential threat, more frequent and severe climate-related disasters, threats to water and food security, slow onset events, increased natural resource scarcity, and forced displacement of communities. But above all Mr President, let us focus on the human dimensions of climate change, including, where necessary, initiatives for preparing communities and whole peoples for relocation.

Mr President,

We have every confidence that under your able presidency and the Polish Government's leadership, you will craft and steer this UNFCCC process to these new innovative levels that can help set a new PEOPLE oriented course for this crucial multilateral process.

When all of us return to our respective homes from Warsaw, to our respective children, and grandchildren we must be able to look them in the eye... and tell them with all honesty... that we have done all that is within our collective powers to combat the devastating consequences of climate change.

I would like to conclude by wishing you all the Kiribati traditional blessings of:
TE MAURI, TE RAOI AO TE TABOMOA – meaning, May Health, Peace and Prosperity be with you Mr President as well as on all of us.

I thank you Mr. President.