



**REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI**

**Statement**

**by**

**His Excellency Anote Tong**

**President of the Republic of Kiribati**

**The General Debate of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
General Assembly**

23 September 2011

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr. President

Excellencies

Mr. Secretary General

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

Kam na bane ni mauri!

I bring warm greetings from the people of Kiribati on whose behalf I address this august body.

Mr. President,

I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your appointment to preside over the 66<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly. Annually we gather here as world leaders to represent our people and to discuss issues of concern to the global community. At this session our theme is " the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" which is appropriate to keep reminding us that peace and security are indeed crucial to the continued harmonious existence of mankind on this planet.

Mr. President,

As a global community we continuously face many challenges to our political, social and economic stability. Natural and human induced disasters have been the cause of much suffering in different regions of the world. Countries and peoples are facing all kinds of security threats from armed conflicts, terrorism, human trafficking, economic recession, climate change and its associated impacts. As a result many communities suffer on a daily basis from increasing poverty, hunger and dislocation. But how can all of this be happening in a supposedly rational world community under the scrutiny of this world body? Is our existing organization in its current form equipped to deal with these emerging issues or is it time to review the structure and effectiveness of our international governance system?

The lack of progress on Climate Change negotiations clearly demonstrates the wide divergence of positions on the issue. And I believe that unless we can approach any mediation with trust and commitment we would be caught in the vicious circle of starting off with our differences in our obsession to protect what we perceive to be our critical national interests.

### **Climate Change**

Mr. President,

I would like to thank the Secretary General for his comments based on his experience during his recent visit to Kiribati. His views are those of an independent observer who came, saw and believed. Your comments Mr. Secretary General are powerful endorsement of what we, the most vulnerable countries, have been saying over the years and my only hope is that it will communicate to all with a sense of moral responsibility the need for urgent action. Climate change will remain the curse of our planet which most nations perceive to be a future event but for the very few it is already reaching disastrous levels.

Mr. President,

Some will argue that climate change does not fall within the conventional definition of security threat but that is simply because it may not be so for them at this point in time. In Kiribati many young people go to sleep each night fearing what will happen to their homes overnight especially during the high tides.

Accelerated and continued erosion of our shorelines is destroying settlements and as I speak some communities are relocating elsewhere on the island. I was glad that the Secretary General was able to understand and feel for himself the sense of threat which our people and those of similarly vulnerable countries experience on a daily basis.

In the specific International Climate Change Forums there is ongoing dialogue and negotiations in an attempt to find amicable solutions to this future imposing threat. But there is ongoing dispute on how to address this global crisis. The question is: how long must we continue to argue about this? When are we going to do anything

about it? Our people and our children, whose lives and future are under serious threat, look to us for leadership. The urgency of the need for action cannot be over emphasized. At Cancun it was my understanding that there was agreement on the need for an urgent package to address the situation of the most vulnerable countries which are now being seriously affected by the adverse impacts of climate change.

Mr. President,

Next year, we will gather again as world leaders to take stock of what we have done since the Rio Summit in 1992. It is my fervent hope that in the light of current scientific evidence and based on the experiences of the most vulnerable countries, we as a global community will embark on bold and innovative initiatives to address the Climate Change issue. I acknowledge the passage of General Assembly resolutions 63/281 and 65/159 on the possible security implications of climate change and the protection of our global climate for present and future generations. And I thank those who saw and supported the need to classify climate change as a security issue.

Mr. President,

In December there will be another conference on climate change in Durban. I acknowledge that climate change negotiations will take several years to conclude but I also believe that there are common grounds on which there is no real debate. The urgent need for the flow of adaptation funds to address the more urgent adaptation needs of the most vulnerable countries is a matter on which I believe there is general consensus. But what is the point in consensus if no concrete action follows. Kiribati was one of the countries which did not sign the Copenhagen Accord because of what we saw as its serious shortcomings but were subsequently persuaded to associate ourselves with it on the premise that doing so would trigger the flow of much needed adaptation funds which had been pledged. We continue to await these funds.

### **Sustainable Development and MDGs**

Mr. President,

We want to achieve sustainable development with what we have. We are grateful to those who continue to assist us and partner us on this journey. But our efforts at achieving sustainable growth will continue to be frustrated by external factors - ongoing uncertainty in the global economic climate, rising food and fuel prices remain major challenges to our sustainable development efforts. On top of all that our increasing preoccupation with the impacts of climate change will progressively dominate our national agenda.

It is no surprise therefore that we continue to be off track in the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of our sustainable development agenda under our National Development Plan. Every step we take forward we are knocked back two or three due to the many challenges we face. It is therefore imperative that climate change adaptation funds are mobilised at the earliest opportunity otherwise we would be forced to divert development resources towards the most urgent adaptation needs. Therefore as we move towards Durban, it is our hope that the Green Climate Fund can be operationalized as soon as possible to allow the most vulnerable countries to attend to their adaptation needs from new resources.

### **Global Governance**

Mr. President,

In the same vein, we believe that all nations and peoples including Taiwan which play a role in international affairs including contributing to climate change should also be part of the solution. During these times of intense hardship and challenges to our existing world order we can ill afford to isolate any nation that has the capacity to assist in our struggles.

### **Conclusion**

I believe that, as a global community, we must be united in our efforts to address any security threat to international peace and security be it within States or between States. We need to forge consensus in our collective action to promote and maintain our collective security.

Let us work together as a global community to address the many conflicts and disputes that are posing serious security challenges to our wellbeing before they consume and condemn our civilization to oblivion.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen in closing I share with you our traditional blessing of Te Mauri, Te Rāoi ao Te Tabomoa.

Thank you.