



# **REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI**

**Statement**

**By**

**His Excellency Taneti Maamau**

**Beretitenti of the Republic of Kiribati**

**The General Debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly  
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**(Check against delivery)**

Mr. President,  
Fellow Leaders,  
Mr Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by praising and thanking the Almighty God for His everlasting love, peace, mercy and blessings upon the world and each one of us here today. In his holy name, “Kam naba bane ni Mauri”.

Mr President, I join previous speakers in congratulating you and the Government of Hungary for your election as President of the General Assembly. Mr. President please be assured of Kiribati’s full support and cooperation as you steer the helm of this august body to make the 77th session a watershed moment for the many interlocking challenges facing humanity.

In the same token, I congratulate and thank our outgoing President of the Maldives for a resoundingly successful 76th session as demonstrated in the accomplishment of his many new initiatives. He has infused a renewed sense of faith and hope in the power of a united humanity and a stronger multilateralism. The most remarkable legacy of his leadership has been for the inclusion of under-represented member states within the workings of the United Nations. Never before have the small island developing states been diversely and widely represented within the realms of the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations – thank you for your stellar and steady leadership especially during these very difficult and trying times. Kiribati welcomes and fully endorses your re-appointment for a second term to further advance and complete a comprehensive overhaul of the United Nations in meeting its obligations for the peoples it serves.

We also appreciate the restructuring of the multi-country offices aimed at bringing the UN closer to the people on the ground. The establishment of the UN's multi-country office (MCO) for the Northern Pacific region which includes Kiribati is a symbolic notion of bringing the UN closer for effective and tailored delivery of UN services. We hope to see more tangible developmental activities occurring in this remote and underrepresented region of the United Nations.

I wish to also acknowledge the great contributions and services that the UN agencies have delivered to my country and people. In particular, I would like to convey a big "Thank You" to the UN Police for all the assistance and support that has enabled our Kiribati police to participate for the first time in the UN peacekeeping missions starting with UNIMISS in South Sudan.

**WORLD LEADERS TO SAVE HUMANITY FROM THE SCOURGE OF WAR, PROMOTE HUMAN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS AND BETTER STANDARDS OF LIVING.**

Mr President,

Seventy six years ago, in establishing the United Nations Charter, our founding fathers committed to cooperate to prevent future wars and eliminate root causes of wars and other violent conflicts in society. They agreed to restore the godliness, dignity and worth of the human person and improve the standard of living for all, to name a few. Today, we take stock of the progress made towards those goals along with new commitments and to reflect and assess if we have truly lived up those values.

**KIRIBATI'S MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE TO UNGA**

Mr. President,

As a Small Island Developing Nation, multilateralism is central to the sustainable development of Kiribati. It offers a variety of opportunities to engage on global issues that are of importance to the wellbeing of our people. With an ocean area

large enough to fit the whole of Europe, our Kiribati Vision for 20 years and foreign policy objectives has been on the promotion of ocean health and wealth. This includes both the risks from nuclear submersibles traversing our waters and the damaging effects of Illegal Unregulated and Unreported activities on our fisheries. Most importantly, is the health of our people especially those who were exposed to the nuclear test blasts on Christmas Island.

We are grateful for the leading role together with Kazakhstan on Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) concerning assistance for persons and environments harmed by nuclear testing. Two of the initiatives, that we proposed, are now reflected in the Vienna Programme of Action Plan. The first is the establishment of a voluntary trust fund to assist countries, communities and people and environments harmed by nuclear testing. Second, is a creation of a Scientific Advisory Body to help provide the Science needed to address health and environmental problems occasioned by past nuclear testing. We are grateful to those countries that have already pledged support and made contributions for these initiatives and especially those who are not yet states parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Let me be clear - humanity should be free now and forever from the tests and use of nuclear weapons. This is why my government has decided to invite the United Nations to use Kiritimati Island as a global or sub-global centre for anti-nuclear researches and related programmes and activities.

## **THEME OF THE 77TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Mr President,

The choice of theme for this 77<sup>th</sup> session cannot be more appropriate and timely. A cloud of uncertainty and fear continues to cast over humanity in light of the two-year long COVID-19 pandemic. Communities, families and businesses are still reeling

from the effects of the pandemic. Compounding these devastations are the persisting challenges of climate change that manifested in coastal erosion reducing available land space and droughts that affected livelihoods of many persons.

The Ukraine war has added to the despair and uncertainty through the unnecessary loss of lives, scarcity of food grains, increase in food and fuel prices and many more. The consequences of COVID-19, Climate Change and the war in Ukraine are clear examples of interlocking challenges that must be addressed urgently using the 77<sup>th</sup> session's motto of solidarity, sustainability and science. Solidarity underscores the sustainability of science and its advances. We saw this through the record-breaking production of vaccines which has saved millions of lives. By emulating the success of sharing vaccine production, of sharing science discoveries, we can ensure many more receive lifesaving vaccines and medicines. On this note, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who have assisted the people of Kiribati in many ways through vaccines, financial support and others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Climate change is another area in which science has and continues to make advances in the science of understanding the root causes and ways to address climate change. However, the lack of solidarity even through multilateralism continues to be the stumbling block to address the global climate change emergency. The targets that have been agreed and set under the Paris agreement including the financial pledges continue to remain out of reach.

Mr. President,

These challenges and the many others that have caused much human suffering in the past 7 decades all have but one thing in common. They are curated by people in positions of power and influence. Much of these irresponsible, selfish, and heartless behavior are part of what the late Queen Elizabeth II referred to as the darker side of human nature. This darker side harbors negative mindsets and attitudes that give in

to greed, hate and the many other vices that breed more bad than good, resulting in conflict, violence across societies and the world at large.

Broken humanity cannot be fixed by wonderful speeches, meetings, resolutions, nor international instruments, but an interplay of greater compassion and solidarity.

Sadly, Mr President, harmful mindsets persist and we ourselves being a remote country, are far from being immune from such. The escalating geostrategic competition in our part of the world means that regionalism and solidarity are at risk of being increasingly used to serve specific national interests, rather than a collective of diverse needs and views working in unison for our common benefit.

As it is the case now, any differing views and sovereign decision that deviates is at risk of being vigorously scrutinized and labelled a foe, through a security lens rather than a genuine desire to pursue sustainable development for the country and its people. Likewise, efforts undertaken by Kiribati to prepare for its graduation from the Least Developed Country status as recommended by the UN are scrutinized. With limited resources, we are committed to drive our developmental agenda and ensure sustainability when we graduate by maximizing benefits from the Phoenix Islands Protected Area and many others.

Our developmental agenda are grounded on our culture, traditional values and norms, practices and aspirations for the benefit of our people. Yet, they continue to be oppressed by neo-colonial thinking that does not take into account our needs, our priorities, and our national context. A system of “global thinking” that remains steeped with legacies of environmental destruction which our peoples have now inherited, as in the case of the mining of Banaba Island. We must work together to ensure that the solutions and actions to correct these legacies and local watershed moments work hand in hand with actions and solutions for today’s interlocking challenges.

Wendell Berry pointed out that “global thinking” is often merely a euphemism for abstract anxieties or passions that are useless for engaged efforts to save actual landscapes. Multilateralism should never be viewed as a ‘one size fits all’ scenario. We are reminded that it is best to orient our work through locally grounded planning and action that focuses on the actual scaled down **watersheds** commonly addressed.

### **77th Session is to be the watershed moment**

Mr President,

We have a duty as leaders entrusted with the power to decide, and as enablers of solutions for the security, peace and wellbeing of our people that is sustained through education, awareness and financing. Acting together side by side in unison and solidarity, making decisions and taking actions based on reality, and facts derived from natural law and true science is a precursor for the transformative solutions we need.

Let us all agree to make this 77th Session a watershed moment. A moment for renewed and positive mindsets; a moment for true discipline action and a moment for a prosperous, peaceful and secure world for all. I believe that together in unison and solidarity as one human family, and with Gods blessings, we can do it.

I conclude by sharing our traditional blessings Te Mauri, Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa on us all.

Thank you