



**Statement of the Republic of Kiribati to the United Nations at its 79<sup>th</sup> Session to be delivered on September 26, 2024 at GA Hall in the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York.**

President of the General Assembly,  
Head of States and Governments  
Secretary General of the United Nations H.E. Mr. Antonio Guterres,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am happy to greet you on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Kiribati,

*Kam na bane ni mauri!*

At the outset, I wish to join other delegations in congratulating your Excellency and the Government and people of Cameroon on your election as the President of this 79<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly and to assure you of Kiribati's full support and cooperation as you steer our work over the next 12 months. We also acknowledge the effort and work of the outgoing President of the 78<sup>th</sup> Session, His Excellency Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago, for his leadership for the past year.

It is with immense pride and a deep sense of responsibility that Kiribati stands before this Assembly, marking 25 years of our membership in the United Nations. A quarter - century ago, Kiribati joined this esteemed body with a simple yet profound belief – that the challenges we face as a Small Island Nation are inextricably linked to the fate of the global community. As we celebrate this milestone, we honor the path we have walked with our global partners and we reaffirm our commitment to the core principles of the United Nations, peace, justice, human rights, responsibility and respect and sustainable development.

The theme, “**Leaving no one behind and acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations**” cannot be more relevant as global conflicts escalates, causing widespread destruction, displacing people and leaving millions neglected and marginalized.

The theme reminds us that, despite the ongoing crises, we must stand firmly together as responsible leaders of the 193 member nations of this greatest multinational organization and commit ourselves to do together whatever is necessary to get the world back on the path of peace, progress and prosperity. Kiribati aligns itself with this noble vision, recognizing the urgent need for collective action that ensures no nation, especially the most vulnerable, is left behind.

What we witness in the world today and for the past 79 years, suggests that the founding fathers' aspiration for lasting peace is far from being realized. The theme is therefore a timely reminder not to lose hope over the heart-breaking scenes before us but to re-energize our unity, solidarity and collective determination to overcome the forces that stand against the multilateralism that our UN family embodies.

Kiribati reaffirms the critical importance of reinvigorating multilateralism. The United Nations must remain the central platform for collective global action, as no single nation can address the complexities of today's challenges on its own - be it pandemics, terrorism, conflict, human trafficking, and climate change to name a few.

It cannot be disputed that the UN that was designed in 1945 by the 51 founding members to restore and maintain world peace and security out of the ash and devastation of World War II, has now become the largest international organization on earth that deals with all aspects of human livelihood and wellbeing to such an extent that its core function of maintaining world peace and improving living standards has been greatly thwarted. This is further exacerbated by the lack of unity and solidarity among member states, coupled with the persistent lack of respect for the UN Charter and for the rights and sovereignty of nations under the Charter. The apparent lack of unity and solidarity within the membership of this family is very much evident in the inability of members to stand united on issues of common concern, the increasing polarization of global issues and in the proliferation of exclusive groupings which tends to breed more disunity and distrust among members.

## **Mr. President**

The success or failure of the United Nations in its core mission to achieve peace, progress and prosperity depends not only on the dedication, commitment and persistence of its leadership and membership but also on the quality of the teamwork between the two. The theme is a reminder of the need to gauge the performance of the United Nations against its core mission of maintaining world peace, improving living standards and the promotion of human rights and freedoms. In this vein, our collective deliberations at this 79<sup>th</sup> Session must shape a more effective path for the United Nations, ensuring it meets the pressing challenges of our time and serves all nations equitably. Considering the significant disparity between the United Nations intended mission and its actual outcomes, an in-depth analysis is needed to explore why the organization has been unsuccessful in preventing and resolving conflicts. It is important that the root causes of these failures are identified and addressed. Equally important is the need to stress the crucial role of the UN Secretary General jointly with the P5 members of the Security Council in putting a stop to ongoing conflicts and in preventing new ones from occurring.

## **UN Security Council Reform**

In order to make the United Nations fit to deal effectively with new and complex challenges confronting humanity at this time, Kiribati calls for long-overdue reforms of the United Nations Security Council to ensure that it reflects the realities of today's world. We believe that the permanent membership of the Council should be expanded to be more inclusive and representative, including allowing seats for Small Island Developing States

(SIDS) and other vulnerable countries. To **Ensure** that the perspectives and needs of the most vulnerable nations are heard and addressed.

### **Mr. President**

My country firmly believes that members' respect for the UN Charter and for each other's rights and sovereignty is key to the peace of the world and to the efficient and effective functioning of the United Nations' multilateralism. It is therefore of paramount importance that each one of us re-commit ourselves to fully respect the Charter and each other's rights and sovereignty. Of equal importance is a renewal of our commitment to trust each other as members of this great United Nations family.

### **Peacekeeping and International Security**

Peacekeeping remains a cornerstone of international cooperation for maintaining global security and stability. Kiribati is proud to have contributed to this effort by deploying police personnel to support the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan. This marks the second time that Kiribati has sent its Police Officers to assist in peacekeeping operations in Sudan, underscoring our deep commitment to international peace and security. Kiribati remains steadfast in its belief that global peace can only be achieved through collective action and we will continue to play our part in supporting United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Kiribati firmly believes that a country without peace, as is the case for countries currently devastated by wars and conflicts, cannot undertake any meaningful development while its people are deprived of enjoying a normal way of life and forced to live in refugee camps or as homeless people surviving through charity and humanitarian donations. People living in such dire conditions have no way of becoming economically productive in order to feel a sense of human pride and dignity and cannot voluntarily free themselves out of such predicament until the conflict has been resolved, peace restored, and life is back to normal. It is therefore crucial that the UN's core mission of maintaining international peace and security must be achieved first before member countries can meaningfully undertake any development and before their people can participate meaningfully in such developments and thereby gain a sense of self-respect and self-dignity in being able to make ends meet on their own independent efforts. In other words, **Development** and **Human Dignity** are not achievable without **Peace**.

### **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

Kiribati's unwavering commitment to global peace is deeply rooted in its tragic history with nuclear weapons. As a nation that has witnessed firsthand the destructive and long-lasting consequences of nuclear testing, Kiribati remain steadfast in our support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), a landmark agreement that represents a collective effort to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons from our world. Kiribati firmly believes that the only path to global security is through complete nuclear disarmament and we stand in solidarity with other states in advocating for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Kiribati recently launched its first ever Foreign Policy during its 45<sup>th</sup> National Day celebration on 12<sup>th</sup> July this year. This landmark document principally seeks to enhance the policy objectives of the core pillars of the Kiribati Vision for 20 Years. It captures the ways forward on how we seek to engage effectively and strategically with our partners in areas of shared and mutual interests to transform and protect our people and nation. Our Foreign Policy also reaffirms our right to self-determination, a right to which we shall continue to exercise, in pursuance of a prosperous, healthy, and peaceful future, in full exercise of permanent sovereignty over our territory and the natural resources within. It also reasserts and re-establishes Kiribati's identity as a "large ocean State" in recognition of our large ocean territory, ocean geography, and ocean resources.

Mr. President allow me at this juncture to highlight Kiribati's views and perspectives on some pertinent issues for small islands such as climate change and sea level rise, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), marine conservation and protection and the Pact of the future—and on the crucial link between **Peace, Sustainable Development, Human Dignity** and the concept of **Leaving No one Behind** as highlighted in the theme.

Kiribati's designation as a Least Developed Country (LDC) reflects not only our economic challenges but also our acute vulnerability to climate change. Kiribati geographical isolation from world major markets coupled with the volatility of global commodity prices and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, exacerbates our development challenges. The high cost of imports, limited export opportunities and reliance on fluctuating external markets further strain our efforts to achieve sustainable growth and development. While we are committed to the long-term goal of graduating from the LDC category, we recognize that the path to graduation must take into account the unprecedented challenges we face, particularly in areas of climate change, economic resilience, and social development. Kiribati welcomes the endorsement of our LDC status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) given the continued vulnerabilities we face. Our graduation status from the LDC category which had been deferred to a later date remains at the back of our minds and what it would mean for us in the future given these unprecedented challenges. It is for this reason among others that we recognize the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) potential as a more fitting measure of vulnerability for all developing countries. For Kiribati and other Small Island Developing States (SIDs) the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) represents a crucial step forward in recognizing the unique vulnerabilities we face. Climate change, rising sea levels, and economic fragility pose threats to our people. We call on the international community to accelerate efforts toward the operationalization of the MVI. This will enable more accurate assessments of vulnerability and unlock targeted support that Kiribati and other vulnerable nations urgently need. Kiribati remains focused on ensuring that when we do graduate, it will be a sustainable and resilient transition that secures a prosperous future for our people.



## **Climate Change**

We believe that humanity must be fully informed that the riches and resources of the planet are finite and must not be overexploited to the extent that the planet's health and wealth is compromised as is now evident in the in the climate crisis caused by the overexploitation of the planet resources during the past century of industrialization.

While international dialogue on climate change has been extensive, Kiribati urges that we move beyond words to concrete actions. The commitments made in international forums including the COP meetings must translate into tangible results on the ground. As we continue to advocate for mitigation, it is clear that adaptation and resilience building are critical for low lying atoll nations like Kiribati. Coastal protection remains a priority for Kiribati and while adaptative measures such as plantation of mangroves and demarcating of seagrass continues, there is a dire need for interventions in hard infrastructure such as resilient seawall.

Climate change is undeniably the driving force behind sea level rise. Kiribati continues to grapple with the challenges posed by sea level rise, which endangers our land, agriculture and our way of life. The AOSIS declaration on sea level rise and statehood encourages our dedication to building resilience against climate impacts and emphasizes the urgent need for global action. The United Nations recognition of the profound impacts of climate change and sea level rise, through the establishment of a high-level platform to address sea level rise during this 79<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA, is a notable and welcome step. It reflects the urgency of addressing climate change and its devastating consequences on vulnerable communities worldwide. In line with our commitment to the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, we strongly advocate for global climate action including maintaining the 1.5-degree Celsius goal and addressing sea level rise as essential to safeguarding the livelihoods, identity, sovereignty and security of Pacific Island Communities especially low-lying atolls, which are only 2 to 3 meters above sea level.

**Mr. President**

## **Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda**

As we continue our journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, Kiribati has localized the SDGs in a 20-year development road map or vision called the KV20 with its primary aim to make Kiribati a healthy, wealthy and most peaceful nation by 2036. This localization effort ensures that the SDGs are not merely theoretical goals but are embedded in our national policies projects and initiatives. Sustainable development is crucial for the long-term resilience and prosperity of Kiribati and other Small Island Developing states. However, the realization of these goals requires enhanced capacity development, technology transfer, and stronger data support systems to better meet the unique and special circumstances of vulnerable countries. We also emphasize the urgent need for reforming global financial institutions to align with the development needs and to ensuring that financing mechanisms are more accessible, flexible and responsive to the development priorities of Small developing states, allowing us to pursue sustainable growth and safeguard our future.

Kiribati also commits and looks forward to the implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). Focusing on several key areas aimed at promoting sustainable development, resilience, and addressing the unique challenges faced by Small Island Developing States such as climate change resilience, sustainable economic development, access to financing, biodiversity conservation to name a few. ABAS reflects the need for tailored solutions that recognize the unique circumstances of SIDS while promoting sustainable development and resilience against external shocks.

## **Marine conservation and protection**

Fisheries continue to hold prominence as a priority sector within our Kiribati Vision for 20 Years Plan (KV20), given that ocean resources significantly contribute to Kiribati's economy.

Kiribati's huge reliance on the tuna fishing license revenue which finances about 70% of the Government's annual expenditure budget, makes it mandatory for the Government to take special care of the health of the marine environment as evidenced in its adoption of the marine spatial planning of its entire 3.5million square km of its tuna rich ocean. In order to promote public awareness and participation in marine protection and conservation, a number of programmes have been launched in some villages and communities in which people are encouraged to make village-based rules for protecting fisheries in their areas against over exploitation and sanctioning offenders in accordance with well accepted cultural practices.

However, with our limited capacity in monitoring and surveilling of our large Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ), we are highly susceptible to Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing expeditions. Considering our heavy reliance on our fisheries sector for livelihood and revenue, Kiribati remains deeply concerned about the ongoing challenge of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, which undermines not only our national effort to sustainably manage marine resources but also global progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. IUU fishing significantly impacts our national economy by depleting fish stocks, undermining sustainable fishing practices, and reducing revenue for local fisheries. This threatens economic stability and the livelihoods of our people dependent on fishing. We acknowledge the assistance of our partners rendered in the addressing this gap and in providing surveillance support. Kiribati calls upon the international community to strengthen cooperation and action to address IUU fishing, ensuring that sustainable fisheries management becomes a reality for all nations, especially those most vulnerable to its impacts.

Kiribati is acutely aware of the profound significance of the ocean to our livelihoods, culture and environment. The health of our marine ecosystem is intrinsically linked to our nation's well-being and to the well-being of future generations. In this context the work of the International Seabed Authority is of paramount importance. The sustainable and equitable management of the seabed and its resources is essential not only for environmental protection but also for ensuring that the benefits derived from these resources contribute to the development and prosperity of all humankind, particularly for Small Island developing States like Kiribati.

## **Pact of the Future**

Kiribati applauds the Secretary General for his great initiative for bringing the whole world together to re-energize the United Nations, as it approaches its 80<sup>th</sup> year anniversary, so that it remains relevant and vital for the peace, progress and prosperity of humanity in the future. The proposed Pact for the Future offers an essential roadmap for strengthening global cooperation on key issues, including climate change, digital transformation, and peacebuilding. We fully support the development of the Global Digital Compact, which will help bridge the digital divide and ensure that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Kiribati are not left behind in the digital age. It is vital that the international community take bold steps to strengthen global governance mechanisms fostering inclusive multilateralism that benefits all countries, particularly the most vulnerable. We believe that the successes of these initiatives will be key to achieving sustainable development, peace and security for future generations.

## **Mr. President**

As I conclude, I express our hope for the future. Kiribati firmly believes that together we can unite in action and commitment, ensuring that no country is left behind in our pursuit of a more sustainable and in a world where peace, sustainable development and human dignity are advanced for present and future generations.

## **Mr. President**

Let us make this 79<sup>th</sup> Session a time to renew our unity, solidarity and togetherness for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations. Together we can make it and together we can do it.

In conclusion, let's embrace our traditional blessings of Te Mauri, Te Raoi, ao Te Tabomoa, which literally means Health, Peace, and Prosperity).

Thank you for your kind attention.