



REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

Statement

by

His Excellency Anote Tong

Beretitenti (President)

of the Republic of Kiribati

at the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Tuesday 20 September 2005

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr Secretary General

Mr. President

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Kam na bane ni mauri!

Accept Mr. President my congratulations on your election to the presidency and my assurances that Kiribati will support you during your term in office. I also want to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Jean Ping, for his able and effective leadership during the 59th Session.

Mr. President

At last week's high-level panel meeting we discussed, among others, the future of this organization and what we expect from it. We heard of the achievements made by our organisation over the past sixty years and express our gratitude to all nations for the cooperation and support culminating in these achievements. To this I also add our congratulations to the Secretary General for his leadership of our organization in these difficult and trying times.

We also heard of the shortcomings of our organization. While we recognize and fully endorse the need for reform in the organization we are concerned that much of the shortcomings in terms of promoting sustainable development in member nations and, in particular, in small island developing states has been due to our inability to deliver on commitments previously made.

Individual member nations have prime responsibility for achieving sustainable development within their borders. But with globalization and the increasing interdependency in our world, individual nations cannot achieve sustainable development acting alone. To attain sustainable development in small island developing states the need for external cooperation and support is understandably more pronounced.

Having taken stock of progress over the past sixty years the challenge now is to consider measures by which we can collectively and through the United Nations address the needs and concerns highlighted during the high-level segment. Of particular concern are the special needs of the least developed countries and small island developing states.

Mr. President

While Kiribati may be categorized as a least developed country and a small island developing state, the people of Kiribati have a genuine desire to develop themselves and at the same time develop their country. And as their elected representatives we have a clear mandate and duty to exert our best efforts to meet their development aspirations.

Population issues are a major challenge in our development efforts. Concerted efforts to promote effective family planning have been given greater focus in our National Development Strategies.

The growing numbers of unemployed youth brings with it new social issues. We are committed to directing the energy of our youth to productive and worthwhile pursuits. Employment opportunities abroad for both men and women such as the arrangements in place with foreign shipping companies, fishing companies and cruise operators will be expanded and new opportunities explored. The New Zealand Government's Pacific Access Category scheme is a very welcome model that merits closer scrutiny by other countries.

The spiralling cost of fuel is an issue of grave concern. The impact of the rising fuel cost has been hardest on least developing countries who are also the least able to afford it. Therefore, the need to accelerate development of alternative sources of energy, including clean and renewable energy is now greater than ever.

Mr. President

We firmly believe that our fishery resources can provide us with the basis for achieving a sustainable future. But in order to be able to do so, we shall need the assistance of our development partners in providing the necessary incentives through the provision of credit, etc. to those investors who are able and willing to develop onshore facilities within resource owning countries.

But before we can achieve that and if we are to achieve our Millennium Development Goals, we shall continue to be reliant on the ODA target of 0.7 percent of GDP being met.

Mr. President

Environmental issues and, in particular, climate change and sea level rise are security issues for countries comprising low-lying coral atolls such as Kiribati. A global and concerted effort, including stronger political commitment, is required to achieve the objectives of the UN Convention on Climate Change.

We are appreciative of the support we have received and continue to receive in developing adaptation measures to the climate change and sea level rise phenomenon. We nevertheless acknowledge the need now to seriously consider the option of having to relocate our peoples when necessary - an option that can only be meaningfully addressed within this forum.

Mr. President

Kiribati fully endorses the need for comprehensive reform in the United Nations. The environment in which the organization now operates is so much different from that of 1945. Reform must take place to ensure that the organization continues to be a relevant institution for its member countries.

Terrorism threatens all. Kiribati condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we support the global fight against terrorism.

We have noted with increasing alarm the "globalization" of terror. We cannot afford to be complacent about terrorism and will contribute, within our resource constraints, to the war against terror. We seek support from those able and willing in the implementation and enforcement of counter-terrorism legislation we have passed in compliance with our obligations as a member of the global community.

Kiribati has contributed to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). We will continue to contribute to this regional effort as long as there is need. Kiribati is also interested in contributing civilian police to peacekeeping missions of the United Nations.

Mr. President

Kiribati supports an expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council. Those countries that are significant contributors to UN programs promoting peace, security and development such as Japan, in our view, merit a permanent seat on the Security Council.

Mr. President

As we consider reforms of the United Nations and as we celebrate 60 years of the United Nations, now is the time to consider the issue of Taiwan and her 23 million people. Taiwan is a country where democracy thrives, where the rule of law prevails and where human rights are respected. Taiwan has also remained able and willing to make significant contributions to the collaborative efforts to secure global peace, security and prosperity.

We also believe that whatever the views are on the question of whether Taiwan is a domestic issue or not, there can be no justification for supporting threatening initiatives such as the so called "anti-secession law" which could have such far reaching effects on regional and global stability.

Mr. President

I am confident that under your able leadership we will work, with unity of purpose and with "less posturing", to address the challenges before us.

Thank you