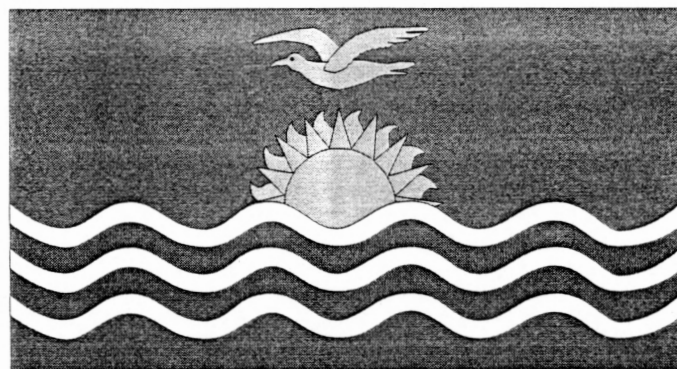


KIRIBATI GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT

2ND CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



**DELIVERED BY HON. TIMBO KEARIKI
MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
17-18 JULY 1996**

**Kiribati Government's Statement at the COP2 of the FCCC,
delivered by Hon. Timbo Keariki,
Minister of Environment and Social Development,
17-18th July, 1996**

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving Kiribati delegation this opportunity to speak at this plenary session of the 2nd Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

At the start, let me congratulate you sir on your election to the chair. I assure you of my delegation's support and confidence.

We come from a group of coral atolls in the Central Pacific. There are 33 coral atolls with a total land area of some 820 sq. km. within an ocean area of some 3.5m. sq.km. As one national has advocated, Kiribati is a country of ocean. But of course, the atolls are about 3 meters above mean sea level and the only international airport at its capital island Tarawa is serviceable for limited flight connections to other parts of the world. Kiribati remains, nonetheless, comparatively isolated from the mainstream of international air routes.

In 1995 the population was 77811 with an estimated per capita GDP of US\$450. Kiribati is classified as a least developed country.

Mr President,

With those background information about my country, it is always an honour to feel fully participating at international meetings such as this. It is also a privilege for it would not have been possible otherwise, without the assistance from the international funds of the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. And our participation reflects our serious concern about climate change.

Kiribati ratified the Convention in February 1995, soon after the new government assumed office. And we have also paid our share contribution to the operation funds of the Secretariat.

Here in this Conference, we sense a feeling of a common purpose. It is the purpose to ensure that the objectives of the Framework Convention on Climate Change shall be met. However, we always wonder with anxiety whether these objectives would be realistic for low lying coral atolls, given the continuing prediction of the IPCC on the sea-level rise whilst there appears to be no set time tables to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, particularly from the industrialised countries.

Some scientists would wish to make us realise that the rate of sea-level rise would only be a few millimetres per year. The best estimate by IPCC of the global sea-level rise is some 50cm by the year 2100 and this is not insignificant. We, in Kiribati, feel that this is serious, and timely action should be taken to mitigate climate change. However, we would wish that the uncertainties in the predictions were to eventually amount to negative radiative forcing and thereby reduce the predicted warming and therefore the predicted sea-level rise.

Serious coastal erosion is experienced on many of our atolls. It has affected the peoples livelihood, and people in certain villages are already accommodating the change of the coastal profiles of their atolls. Certain villages are already retreating further inland. We keep wondering whether sea-level has not already been rising and that coastal erosion experienced is not the consequence of the rising sea level.

It is only recently that we have a high precision tide gauge installed at Tarawa, so we could not be able to tell just what had been the situation of sea level in Kiribati. We cannot compare the immediate past situation of the sea-level with what it is now, or what will be over any further period.

Kiribati is planning a number of programmes to specifically address climate change issues. In addition, we participate in the US Climate Initiative Programme and under this programme we intend to complete, among other works, a Vulnerability Assessment of a few of our atolls. The programme covers some of the responsibilities that we have to undertake under the Convention.

We also participate in a sea-level monitoring programme funded by Australia and managed by the Australian National Tide Facility in collaboration with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

And as I mentioned earlier, a high precision tide gauge has been installed at Tarawa under this programme. It will increasingly prove to be a very important monitoring programme for the state of sea-level in Kiribati.

Programmes to upgrade our national capability to monitor climate change and its impacts are also being formulated. We like to be able to understand and to detect whether the sea around Kiribati is rising or not. We wish to ensure that policy makers and the public are sufficiently briefed on the issues of climate change. An early start on these programmes depends on availability of resources, and we will depend on international and regional cooperation to implement them.

My government has started work on a framework law on the environment. This is in line with our policy to strengthen management of our local environment. We need to monitor our corals, and manage our coastal zone, including mangrove ecosystems. We need to protect and enhance the quality of ground water lens.

But we realise that we would still be threatened by climate change and sea-level rise. IPCC predictions of sea level are quite alarming for low lying atolls.

And we will continue to turn to the international community with hope and confidence that it will continue to mitigate climate change. Indeed, climate change is a common concern of mankind, and only the international community that can safely address the issues and save the global environment. We therefore trust that in these forums, we will be able to agree on clear, and timely actions that the various categories of the parties should take to meet their obligations under the Convention. We should not fail to achieve the objectives of the Convention.

The Convention recognises that there are those that are most vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change, including small islands. They are also in the forefront in any test for the resilience of the world's ecosystems to adverse consequences of climate change. If they would not adapt to stresses brought about by climate change, then it would be questionable whether the international community can save the rest of the totality of the world's ecosystems.

Therefore, we urge that a decision on the adequacy and urgency of the commitments under the Convention should be strongly guided by a consideration of the needs to save the most vulnerable ecosystems.

I thank you, sir.

RECORD OF MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

COUNTRY: Kiribati NAME OF SPEAKER: H.E. Mr. Timbo Keariki
 DAY: 18 July TIME: _____ NOTE-TAKER: Pascale J. STATEMENT PICKED UP? ☒

AGBM-RELATED ISSUES		
The speaker indicated:	<input type="checkbox"/> a preference for an amendment <input type="checkbox"/> a preference for a protocol <input type="checkbox"/> that s/he cannot indicate a preference at this time <input type="checkbox"/> AOSIS <input type="checkbox"/> EU	Comments:
The protocol/ other legal instrument should include:	<input type="checkbox"/> mandatory policies and measures <input type="checkbox"/> voluntary policies and measures	Policies or measures specified: <u>but has started work on a framework law on the environment. This is inline with their policy to strengthen management of their local environment.</u>
Does the country support any particular target?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: _____ % by _____ year <input type="checkbox"/> no	Comments:

SBSTA-RELATED ISSUES	
Reaching targets within the country by the year 2000 (Annex I Parties)	Comments:
Development and transfer of technology	Comments:
IPCC Second Assessment Report (SAR)	Comments: <u>Stated the best estimate by IPCC of the global sea^{level} rise is about 50cm by 2100 - a very important finding. Commented due to this serious finding timely action is needed to mitigate climate change. However, stated that the uncertainties in the IPCC predictions were to eventually amount to negative forcing + thereby reduce the predicted warming + therefore the predicted sea-level rise.</u> <u>- Also stated that one drawback in the IPCC is that there are no set time-tables.</u>

SBI-RELATED ISSUES		
Should the GEF be the permanent financial mechanism?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Comments: <u>Programmes to upgrade national capability to monitor climate change + its impacts are being formulated. It Stated a need to understand + detect whether the sea around Kiribati is rising or not. These programmes depend on the availability of</u>
Activities Implemented Jointly (AIJ)	<input type="checkbox"/> in favour of pilot phase <input type="checkbox"/> distinction made between JI/AIJ	Comments: <u>Sea-level monitoring prog. funded by Australia + managed by the Australian Natl. Tide Facility in collaboration w/ the South Pacific Regl. Env. Programme.</u>
Preparation of non-Annex I communications	Comments:	

* resources, + will depend on intl. + regional cooperation to

OTHER COMMENTS: implement them.

Programmes to specifically address c.c. issues include:
 - US Climate Initiative Programme participation (under this programme plans to complete a Vulnerability Assessment of a few of their atolls + Prog. covers some of the responsibilities under the Convention.
 - Sea level monitoring programme