

**10TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
PARTIES**

TO

**UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON
CLIMATE CHANGE**

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

The Convention After 10 Years:

Accomplishments and Future Challenges

Hon Martin Puta Tofinga

Minister for Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development

Republic of Kiribati

The Convention after 10 years: accomplishments and future challenges

The year 2004 represents the 10th anniversary of the entry into force of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

I would like to remind everyone that in a few weeks time, the international community will meet in Mauritius to review the Barbados Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States and to finalise our implementation strategy. Clearly, since it is our strategy, we would like to see an outcome that truly reflects our needs and takes into account our Alliance Of Small Island States positions established in the Climate Change negotiations over the years.

This convention has helped focus world attention on the issue of climate change and drawn attention to the plight of vulnerable countries, particularly Small Island Developing States to the impacts of climate change.

The key aspect of the Convention is Article 2. It states that ...the ultimate objectives of this Convention is to prevent dangerous human induced interference with the climate system.

The key question to ask is; has the Convention achieved its ultimate aim and if not what needs to be done.

The answer to this question is not so clear cut. We have seen some progress. The development of the Kyoto Protocol is a significant step forward. It is the first international legal agreement to establish a market in greenhouse gases. This is a major step forward and we therefore need to build on this.

We now see most industrialised countries taking commitments to reduce their emissions below 1990 levels. Unfortunately the country that produces the most greenhouse gases, has decided not to participate in the Kyoto Protocol and appears to be making little progress in reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions. This is not good and for the benefit of all, we strongly urge you to seriously consider the implications of such actions.

Being a Small Island Developing State and a Least Developed Country, we are probably one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the impacts of climate change and we strongly believe that more needs to be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We see this as requiring three pillars of action, namely;

1. All industrialised countries to the Kyoto Protocol must take further significant commitments to reduce their emissions. We appreciate that they have already made commitments but much more needs to be done.
2. Those industrialised countries that have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol, must commit to taking action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. This is not just a commitment to reduce the growth in their emissions but a commitment to reduce their emissions outright. The notion of sustainable development, let alone the issue of survival, of countries such as mine would be meaningless without this commitment.

3. Developing countries that are major emitters of greenhouse gas emissions must also take on commitments to reduce their emissions. To do this we should consider an arrangement for developing countries to continue to develop, yet at the same time reduce their emissions.

The two concepts, sustainable development and the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions need not be incompatible. They should go hand in hand. Commitments to reducing emissions should lead to new renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce air pollution and build self-sufficiency in energy production. Even some small island developing States, (like my own) would be willing to take on commitments if these were linked to commitments from our developed country partners to introducing renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies into our countries.

To make progress on these three pillars we need good faith from all Parties. We must establish a process where we can come together and discuss these issues in an open and frank dialogue. We need to learn from the many institutions, think tanks and environmental NGOs and the Churches, that have developed ideas on how we can move forward in taking a global approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Kiribati and the Alliance of Small Island States strongly support the idea of developing a dialogue process to discuss future actions under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. We strongly support the idea of inter-sessional workshops or seminars to further our discussion on moving forward.

For the sake of our very survival we need to move forward in a meaningful way. I make a strong appeal to those who try to block progress, to step aside. Many of you are already very rich from the sale of oil and other fossil fuels. If you really do believe our circumstances are the same, I invite you to come to Kiribati and see for yourselves that our adaptation needs belong in the here and now, and not in some distant future. Small Island Countries like mine stand to disappear under the impact of climate change and sea level rise – step aside and let the process move forward so we can at least stand some chance.

The Convention has made progress in the last 10 years but more needs to be done. Let us work together and not block progress in protecting this precious Earth.

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Intervention made by

Hon Minister Martin Puta Tofinga

Minster for Environment, Lands and Agricultural
Development

Kiribati

Panel 2:

Impacts of climate change, adaptation measures and sustainable
development

Climate change, adaptation and sustainable development in the Small Island States are issues which we now realize are intricately linked. However, our efforts in trying to integrate these into our own national processes are meaningless given the way the negotiations have gone on over the last few days of this COP.

The recent past in the region of the Pacific has given an indication of what we fear may be an environment that we may have to live in, in the future. We are seeing an increase in the severity and frequency of extreme weather events. A lucid example is the recent event in our region affecting Niue with damages amounting to more than its national GDP.

This is just one example to highlight to this meeting that our nations are extremely vulnerable and that the physical impacts of climate change are happening now. Current impacts include coral bleaching and inundation of sea water onto the land affecting our water supply and our crops. Coastal areas are being eroded affecting the economy and social life of all the community.

Global warming is a great risk to my own small vulnerable country, Kiribati. The islands in my country are hardly more than 3 meters above current mean sea-level and the absence of elevated areas therefore limit our options of retreat considerably.

In the long-term, an increase of 2 degrees Celsius in global temperatures would likely submerge our entire country, but long before that we fear that the devastating effects of extreme tides and storm surges would render our islands uninhabitable.

We face not only losing our land, but we also face losing our economy, our culture and our communities.

Urgent action is required to assist Small Island States adapt to climate change. And let me state again that in order for our

development to be sustainable, the issues of climate change and its adverse impacts need to be integrated.

I was looking forward to this COP when I was informed that the central agenda to be discussed was adaptation. However, in the last two days, I've been disappointed to learn that progress has been slow.

We have no time to waste.

We acknowledge with gratitude the pledges made so far to inject funds into the new funds to address climate change namely the Special Climate Change Fund and the Least developed Countries Fund. However, the current guidance to access these funds have again placed us in the same position we were in before their creation. I ask that the urgent and immediate needs of LDCs in addressing climate change impacts, be recognized as separate from that of our own development requirements.

Let me reiterate that the focus of the adaptation discussion should only be about adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change. It is not about impacts of response measures. If anything, this issue should be more appropriately addressed along with mitigation issues.

Climate Change is indeed an issue of survival for us. This is about our people and our children's future.

The UNFCCC and the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol are ^{important} ~~precious~~ commitments for my country. I would like to take this opportunity to give my country's appreciation to those countries that have already ratified and we ask you to help us move the Kyoto process forward. To us anything that prescribes deeper cuts in the emissions of Annex 1 countries and ultimately achieves the

objectives of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol is the way forward.

I sincerely hope that the outcomes of these discussions are fruitful and are delivered in appropriate ways for the future survival and sustainable development of our vulnerable country.

Thank you for your attention.