



GOVERNMENT OF KIRIBATI

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Kiribati Statement at the COP4, delivered by the Hon. Tewareke Borau, Minister of Environment and Social Development.

Mr. President,

Congratulations to you on being elected to the presidency of this very important meeting of the Conference of the Parties held here in your great country. The Conference is a very significant one for the global environment because matters that were not sufficiently analysed and concluded at COP3 held in Kyoto are now being negotiated. It is fitting that the venue is here in a developing country blessed with abundant environmental resources, to remind us all of the value of the global environment.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to express through you, Sir, our gratitude to the government and the people of Argentina for the kindness and hospitality that have been extended to us since our arrival.

The Rt Hon Prime Minister from Tuvalu has delivered a very eloquent and realistic statement about the plights of the small island states, and we fully associate ourselves with that statement and the sentiments expressed therein. We also wish to associate ourselves with the statement made by Samoa on behalf of the AOSIS.

My country consists of small low-lying atolls, which are very different to the massive landmasses of continental countries. But here in Argentina, within the Southern Continent of the Americas, there is some feeling of the warmth of the waters that are familiar to small islands, such as in Kiribati, within the Pacific Ocean. Let us hope that the natural beauty of this country forming the backdrop of this conference has provided a fitting setting for the negotiations.

My government has always been extremely worried and concerned about climate change, and in particular sea-level rise. And you are well aware that the IPCC has assessed a current projection of sea-level rise at between 15cm and 95cm by the year 2100. The small atolls and islands of Kiribati are only within a meter high above water levels, a few meters in width and a few kilometers in length. Much of the land has been eroding. Roads, buildings and village sites are destroyed.

While Annex 1 countries have set themselves limitations on their greenhouse gas emissions, they and some other countries have not fully committing themselves in addressing the problem. They do not realise the very serious adverse effects of climate change which we, in a tiny part of the world will share an unproportional burden. Sea level rise is destroying our country. Some motu have disappeared and these negotiations are too late for them. In the meantime, we are seriously considering and making our plans as to how best we can adapt and survive, and we appreciate your understanding of the situation that small islands are in.

What is happening now? Around the Pacific the sea level is rising and we are observing changes in our weather. Traditional knowledge of alternate rainy and dry seasons, when and where they normally occur in the region, have become unreliable. Clearly climate change and sea-level rise are happening and, as we have implied earlier, the impact for Small Islands is a matter of survival. The people of Kiribati are already taking measures to adapt to the threats and impacts of climate change.

We know that at this Conference many issues relating to the Kyoto Protocol are being negotiated. Let me express a sincere hope that we will reach an agreement at this conference, on the best way to get the Kyoto Protocol entered into force sooner rather than later.

Kiribati is very much a part of the global village and we are most aware about climate change because its impacts hit us first. As small island countries in the front line we will continue to face the adverse impacts of the global climate change which threaten the existence of our small island country. In our being part of this global village, we realise that the destruction of our homeland and communities will also shed great doubt on the future of the rest of the world. Allow me therefore to ask you all to demonstrate that we all care for the integrity of the global environment world that we share, and that we do so as custodians for future generations of the human race.