



# **REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI**

**Statement**

**By**

**His Excellency Anote Tong**

**President of the Republic of Kiribati**

**At the occasion of the High Level Segment of COP 16 and CMP 6**

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**Cancun, Mexico**

Madame President, Excellencies, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, allow me to thank our gracious host President Filipe Calderon, your Government and the people of Mexico, for hosting this milestone Conference at this critical time for all our peoples. I also want to congratulate you on your election as President of this, the 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties and the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol,

Madame President

Last year, along with many other leaders, I went to Copenhagen full of expectations for an outcome which would give hope to our people against the bleak predictions of the 4<sup>th</sup> AR of the IPCC on Climate Change impacts. Today we have come to Cancun, having learnt to be a lot less optimistic but, hopeful that we come armed with the Copenhagen Accord.

An agreement which Kiribati did not sign in Copenhagen because it fell well short of the conditions needed to ensure the future survival of our people. We did however subsequently associate ourselves with it after being led – or misled – to believe that doing so would trigger the flow of funds, that would be new and additional, needed for urgent adaptation measures. One year has passed since and the generous pledges made then have since remained unavailable to most of us, with yet, still an unbalanced treatment of adaptation and mitigation in spite of our increasingly desperate situation.

Madame President

The projections coming forward from the scientific community does not only confirm that climate change is happening now but further projects, that earlier scenarios of the severe adverse impacts of climate change in particular sea level rise may well have been too conservative. Our experience and those of other low-lying island countries in the Western Pacific certainly indicates that something is seriously wrong

when rows of trees and coastlines are progressively being washed away with time. Since I last spoke at the COP15 in Copenhagen one year ago our communities have suffered considerably more damage. The impacts of unusually severe storms and weather related disasters being experienced even today in different regions of the planet clearly indicate the severity and widespread nature of the problem.

Madame President

It is important to note that impacts of climate change may be categorised differently as significant or urgent for different countries. For the most vulnerable countries on the frontline, severe adversities are already being experienced as I have often said in my earlier statements – these include severe erosion, loss of homes and infrastructure, contamination of water supplies and destruction of food crops, impacts which, can ultimately lead to the demise of island states like Kiribati.

The need for urgency is however, not being reflected in the slow pace of negotiations, which, have not made real progress since Copenhagen. I do not doubt that much work and resources have been directed to the process, the fruits of which, I hope, will lead to concrete decisions made here in Cancun that will ultimately lead to a legally binding agreement one year from now in Durban.

We should all be aware that the longer we delay in reaching agreement the greater the vulnerability of those on the frontlines of climate change.

Madame President

I, as other representatives of most vulnerable countries that have spoken before me, are disappointed and deeply concerned, that as an international community we continue to focus on negotiating a detailed and comprehensive arrangement which would appease the views of the different groups involved in the process. We all know that such an approach, whilst the most ideal, would probably take the next few years, if not decades, to conclude.

For the most vulnerable among us, time is running out. We demand that attention be centred on the needs of those most vulnerable

As part of Kiribati's effort and attempt to forge consensus on the way forward, to reach agreement on those elements within the current negotiation text to form part of the package that can come out of Cancun, my Government hosted an international conference on climate change – the Tarawa Climate Change Conference – last month, the outcome of which is freely available to those interested.

Madame President

The wide and inclusive participation and opportunity to speak in the Tarawa Climate Change Conference was not an accident. It was deliberately designed to be inclusive as we strongly believe that such dialogue must necessarily involve those on different sides of the climate change debate. It should include all nations, whether developed or developing, a high country or a low country, a rich country or a poor country, a country with billions of people or a country with thousands of people as we all share the same planet.

The dialogue should also include representations and the voice of civil society, churches, women's and more importantly youth groups whose future we are talking about.

We therefore urge that the UNFCCC adopts this inclusive approach and to include Taiwan in this crucial dialogue on saving our planet. It is just as much their home as it is ours and they too have a responsibility to contribute to this global dialogue and action.

Madame President

As clearly articulated in the Ambo declaration, the urgency of the issue; in light of the special circumstances and the particular vulnerability of countries on the frontline of climate change; requires that the package is translated into action in the immediate term in order to ensure the long term viability of those most vulnerable and on the frontline.

We as members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum representing those most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change convened the Tarawa Conference on Climate Change to send a strong signal to the rest of the international community of the urgency our need to respond now and to make decisive

commitments now so that any response to the climate change calamity would not be too late for us.

Madame President

As an international community we cannot continue with business as usual, we must work together to respond and act with responsibility; we must listen, take heed of what is happening in these most vulnerable states in the frontline and act accordingly, act with urgency...what is happening in these frontline States concerns all of us... it must be taken as an early warning to the international community and a precursor for what could ultimately be the fate of humanity if further action is delayed. The whole world and in particular the most vulnerable states in the frontline of the climate crisis are looking to Cancun to provide the global leadership needed for urgent action to ensure the survival of humanity – this is a struggle for humanity

Madame President

We are optimistic that agreement can be reached here at Cancun on urgent assistance to the most vulnerable States in the frontline of the climate change crisis. We call on this Conference for decisions on an “urgent package” for concrete and immediate implementation of action, consistent with the principles and provisions of the Convention, to assist those in most vulnerable States on the frontline to respond to the challenges posed by the climate change crisis;

Madam President

We must go beyond just recognising the special needs of the most vulnerable States in the frontline of the climate crisis. We must take the responsibility to move beyond the recognition of the special need for urgent action. We must make decisions now that spell out what these urgent actions are.

Madam President

We would all like to go away from this conference with the peace of mind knowing that something has been achieved here in Cancun. I would like to return to the people, in particular the young people in my country with some assurance that as

leaders we have agreed here in Cancun on measures to guarantee their future. A commitment to mobilize adaptation funds such as those pledged at Copenhagen which are accessible for the special needs of small and most vulnerable island states.

Mr/Madam Chair

I thank you and I share with you and all delegates to this conference our traditional Kiribati blessings of Te Mauri (health) Te Raoi (peace) ao Te Tabomoa (prosperity) as we deliberate on this greatest responsibility facing our shared home and planet.