



REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

Statement by

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Of the Republic of Kiribati

High Level Segment,

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Madam President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

“KAM NA BANE NI MAURI” (Warm Greetings to You all)

At the outset, please allow me to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to our gracious host, the Government and people of Kenya for the warm hospitality since our arrival in your beautiful country. I also extend our gratitude to the UNEP Secretariat for the excellent running of this first United Nations Environment Assembly.

Madam President,

I congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of this first and historic United Nations Environment Assembly. I am confident that under your able stewardship, our work towards improving the security and quality of life for all members of our global community will effectively progress to new levels of international political commitment in an inclusive, equitable and transparent manner.

Madam President,

Allow me to take this opportunity to highlight a few issues that need to be addressed in this fora;

Kiribati is one of the Pacific Small Islands Developing States and also a Least Developed Country. We are an atoll country less than three meters above sea level. We are one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change, specifically sea level rise. For us, Climate change poses the most urgent national security challenge not in the future but right now. We cannot meaningfully speak of sustainable development without addressing Climate change because it is threatening the very existence of us as a country and people. We already experience severe coastal erosions, involuntary displacement of villages, decreases in local livelihoods, food and water security. These are putting enormous pressure on domestic institutions, natural resources, the national budget, and more importantly the sense of well-being of our people. The pressure will continue to worsen if no remedial actions are taken now. Adaptation is important to us as it provides us with some short term solutions to cope but in the long term we need us all to commit to cutting emissions.

I also wish to highlight the issue of solid and hazardous wastes which are major threats to the environment and sustainable development of Kiribati. Due to limited capacity in sound disposal management and land space for long term storage, such wastes pose a great challenge to us. There are few good management options for atoll countries and it has negative impacts on the country's biodiversity, public health, water quality, fisheries,

tourism, trade and other areas of national interest. We need international and global partnership to help us to locally address this challenge.

Madam President,

In our own way we try to meet our global obligations. My Government has designated and established one of the largest Marine Protected Area in the world known as the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) - an area of over 400,000 square kilometers, roughly the size of California. Our President recently announced our decision to ban commercial fishing in PIPA from 2015. We believe that this will not only contributes to the sustainable livelihood of our local communities but contributes to the environmental sustainability at the global level. We led the development of the Pacific Oceanscape and continue to advocate for good oceans management. The ocean is our home and our biggest asset but through climate change it is also our biggest threat.

We are exploring long term survivability and self-reliance options that safeguard the culture, heritage and identity of the Kiribati people. I wish to stress that for Kiribati, like other Pacific Islands, capacity development, technology transfer and financial resources remain among our top priorities to put our plans into action and complement our national efforts. We are working on improving the education and the skills of our people to a level where they are able to compete for jobs in the international labour market. This means our people become more equipped and have acquired skills to implement

actions to meet SIDS plans, MEAs, MDGs and now the SDGs and 3rd SIDS Conference Outcomes that are in the making.

Madam President,

UNEP plays a major role in advocating and mobilizing resources and funding for capacity building and institutional strengthening. We look to UNEA to ensure that our SIDS issues and priorities are fully reflected in UNEP's programme of work. To this end I acknowledge the decision to establish UNEP's Pacific sub-regional office in Samoa and support the call made this week for a dedicated forum on SIDS to be an integral part of UNEA.

I thank you Madam President.