



REPUBLIC OF KIRIBATI

**Honorable Tinian Reiher, SPECIAL ENVOY and
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.**

Ministerial Statement

**Asian Ministerial Conference on Risk Reduction
Wednesday, 4th July 2018**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Excellency-Deputy Prime Minister
Distinguished Head of Delegations
UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction.
Members of our Asian and Pacific Region
Ladies and gentlemen

I bring you warm greetings from the Government and people of Kiribati on whose behalf, I am very honoured and privileged to represent.

Kam na bane ni mauri,

Allow me at the outset to pay tribute to the Government and the people of Mongolia for the warm welcome and awesome hospitality extended to my delegation since we first set foot in your beautiful city of Ulaanbaatar.

Mr Chairman, this very important regional biennial conference is the second following the adoption of the Sendai framework in 2015. It constantly reminded us that we, as individual countries, cannot progress alone. The opportunities presented through the AMCDRR are indeed vital in our concerted efforts, as a region, towards achieving the outcomes of the Sendai Framework and accordingly, I congratulate and thank you Mr Chairman for your great leadership and through you to your Government for kindly hosting this 2018 AMCDRR.

Mr Chairman,

It gives me great pleasure to present to this conference some of the milestones we have achieved since our meeting in 2016.

1. Kiribati Vision 20 a.k.a KV20 (March 18 2018)

The first long term Development Vision for Kiribati was launched early this year and was first presented to our Development Partners last week. The Vision, among other things, recognizes the complexity and cross cutting nature of both climate change and disaster risk that can critically hamper the pillars of our development efforts in the next 20 years and most importantly; our ability as a nation to provide resources central to human and natural development and the provisions of basic human needs.

It means, in brief, that Kiribati will have to address these issues jointly in the context of its broader economic development.

2. Climate Change Policy – (25 June- 2018)

Kiribati Climate Change Policy launched in June 2016, also emphasised the linkage between climate change and disaster risk, and the need to address them both (jointly) through a central theme of risk reduction. The policy was 3 folds in addressing the linkages between disaster and climate change:

- (i) Strengthened disaster risk preparedness (through innovative technology), response and recovery across all sectors at island and community level;

- (ii) Enhanced coordination of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management programmes and legislations- linked to national development aspirations.
- (iii) Enshrined principles and promotion of "humanitarian assistance" and "building back better" concepts giving due consideration to all risks associated with climate change.

3. Improving Emergency Management Arrangements – Improved Emergency and Fire Response in Kiribati.

Kiribati signed a twin partnership MOU with the South Australian Country Fire Service and with the Pacific Emergency Management Alliance of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in 2016 to enhance capacity of the national emergency and fire-fighting services. Members of both Institutions were in Kiribati last week to launch the partnership- an event marked with the handing-over of 2 fire trucks, fire-fighting equipment and training on fire response and rescue.

4. National Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Building on AMCDRR and the Pacific Resilient Partnership platforms, the Office of the President has organised a biennial forum of Island Mayors (June this year) with the theme "Enhancing the Resilience of I-Kiribati from Disaster and Climate Change Risks". The DRM and CC stakeholders took opportunity to integrate disaster risk and climate change issues into the forum's agenda.

Similar events will be organised in future to include other stakeholders.

5. Improving DRM Governance at the Local Government Level- Establishment of the Island Disaster Committee.

Since 2015, Island Disaster Committees have been formally established in 7 remote outer islands to coordinate disaster risk management initiatives. The remaining 12 islands will be completed by end of this year.

Government will continue to provide these committees with the necessary capacity building support into the future.

6. Whole of Island Approach and integrated vulnerability assessments.

Kiribati adopted the concept of 'Whole of Island Approach' in 2014 with primary objectives to:

- Adapt to the adverse impacts of climatic changes and variability; and
- Strengthen islands' responsive capacities to man-made and natural hazards through holistic and integrated approach.

Since then 8 Local Governments have assessed the vulnerabilities of their communities and the next immediate step will be to assist them to incorporate in their respective Island Strategic Plan along with their other development

priorities, and to support their implementation. IVAs for the remaining 11 outer islands will be completed hopefully by end of 2020.

7. Leadership in the region on Climate Change and DRM.

As this conference is aware, the Pacific Islands Leaders Forum has recently adopted the “Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific” in September 2016. The FRDP provides a high level strategic guidance to different stakeholder groups on how to enhance resilience to climate change and disasters, in ways that contribute to and are embedded in sustainable development. This framework is the first of its kind for a sub-region and it does reflect the journey that we, Pacific Island States, are taking into the future.

We hope that the sharing of knowledge and experience from our sub-region will enable us to further strengthen and enhance our partnerships in AMCDRR. The stock taking process provided through the biennial AMCDRR in particular, has and will continue to assist us in measuring our progressive efforts in addressing the needs and problems of our respective communities.

Challenges in implementing specific Sendai recommendations.

Our prime concern is that our efforts thus far may be at risk if Kiribati graduates from its Least Developed Country status. It will set us back several years of efforts in achieving our economic targets and aspirations under our KV20 more so, our efforts in addressing disaster and climate change associated risks.

Like many other SIDS, Kiribati is constantly being challenged by:

- (i) The complications relating to financing preparation and responses to disaster events.
- (ii) The absence of a risk transfer mechanism (such as risk insurance) which has resulted in flood of requests for assistance processed under the national disaster fund project each year.
- (iii) The inability of our communities to meet costs associated with disaster events causing wider impact on our national budget to fill in the gaps and to fund other developments.
- (iv) The inability to provide effective early warning systems for our rural communities because of the geographic and dispersed nature of our islands. We are grateful, however, for the assistance we have received including the support from the Indian Government for the Climate Early Warning systems in the Pacific and we hope for further assistance in this area.

Notwithstanding these challenges, Kiribati is committed to achieving the Target E of the Sendai Framework through:

- (i) Further assessment and revision of its legislations to address both, Disaster Risk and Climate Change before the end of 2019.
- (ii) Ensure a thorough revision of its National Disaster Risk Management Plan (2012) is undertaken and endorsed before 2020.

- (iii) Ensure all remote rural communities are supported by local disaster committees by 2020; and finally,
- (iv) That disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation priorities are incorporated in the development planning processes both at the national and local level.

Concluding Remarks

Chair, I have no doubt that our deliberations over the next few days will put forward a plan that will further accelerate progress and introduce innovative ways to strengthen our capacity in addressing disaster risk and most importantly, the critical challenges that hinder our efforts going forward.

Thank you.