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**Presentation by**

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**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**United Nations**

**Geneva**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies

Members of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am honored to present my country’s report for consideration and review by the UPR Working group. In doing so, I bring to you all very warm greetings from the people and Government of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am privileged to address this Working Group. In Kiribati we start all addresses by conferring blessings of peace and security on all those present so I would like to begin by saying

**“KAM NA BANE NI MAURI”**

2. Mr. President, I also wish to congratulate you for your election as the President of the Human Rights Council. Under your guidance and leadership, together with the assistance of the Troika, I have no doubt that at the end of the day, the Kiribati delegation will receive well guided advice and support on our national work on human rights.

3. Mr. President, I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all stakeholders involved in the preparation of our 2nd National UPR Report. In particular, I wish to thank the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the Pacific in Fiji, the various United Nations agencies in our region, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community through the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), and the Commonwealth Small States Office here in Geneva. We welcome this support and the assistance from our development partners in our efforts to ensure that our international obligations under the various human rights conventions are addressed through the establishment and strengthening of our national institutional and legal frameworks. In saying this, I should add Mr. President that in Kiribati, we are blessed with age old strong traditional and cultural institutions that safeguards the basic human rights of our people and communities.

5. Mr. President, in 2010 when Kiribati presented its first ever UPR Report, it was clear that a lot of development would be required for us to meet these international obligations relating to human rights. Today I am proud to say that Kiribati has accomplished many of the international requirements from the recommendations since the last review.

*Progress to-date*

6. Mr. President, in the last review Kiribati had received 83 recommendations out of which 42 were accepted, 11 were not supported and 30 were to be considered in due process. I am happy to inform the Working Group of the significant progress that my Government has achieved so far in meeting these commitments.

7. Work in the follow up of the 1st Review, involved relevant Ministries, Civil Society and Faith Based Organizations in the implementation of the recommendations before the Kiribati National Human Rights Task Force was established in 2014.

8. The Task Force led our national preparation for the 2nd UPR Review and consider submissions from all Stakeholders who also participated in the Consultation process.

9. The Second UPR Report that was submitted to the Working group in October 2014, reports on the progress and continued commitment of my Government to meeting these Human Rights obligations. The report clearly emphasizes the achievements since the last review in 2010 in relation to mainstreaming human rights into the formal machinery of Government and through the following:

1. Kiribati commitment to Human rights and related international conventions
2. Legislative and Policy Reforms
3. The creation of the Human Rights Task Force
4. Awareness programmes on Human Rights
5. The National Development Plan (known as the Kiribati Development Plan)
6. Child Labor Policy
7. Human Rights special procedures
8. Gender and inequality policies
9. Health, Education and Environment programmes

*New Legislation*

10. In terms of legislation, my Government has reviewed and is addressing those treaty obligations with respect to incorporating human rights principles into its national legislation. The following legislation have been passed by the Parliament of Kiribati since the first review in 2010:

i) Children, Young Persons and Family Welfare Act 2013;

ii) Education Act 2013;

iii) Amendment of the Constitution to establish the Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs (MWYSA); and

iv) Te Rau n te Mweenga/ Family Peace Act, 2014

*Other Human Rights related development*

11. Other developments that have been achieved in protecting and supporting human rights are:

11.1) Good progress in the area of Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence (ESGBV), following the alarming results of the Kiribati Family Health and Support Study in 2008 which rated us highly in the region in terms of domestic violence. The study compelled the need for urgent action and the outcome has been a very strong political call as well as national commitment to eliminate violence against women and girls.

11.2) To specifically deal with ESGBV, a targeted programme was set up to coordinate ESGBV programmes and technical and financial assistance from various donors and development partners including Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Turkey, UNWOMEN, UNFPA,UNICEF,PIFS, SPC and the World Bank has assisted my Government to implement these programmes.

11.3) In 2010, the Government of Kiribati endorsed the *Elimination of Sexual and Gender Based Violence Policy and National Action Plan* (2011-2021). This has led to a wide range of activities and changes, including the passing of Te Rau N TeMweenga/ Family Peace Act 2014, Male Advocacy programmes, adolescent Girls initiatives and collaborative work with key line Ministries and CSO’s in mainstreaming GBV into their programmes and building their capacities.

11.4) In addition, the finalization of two comprehensive implementation plans for the National Approach to Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence Policy and National Action Plan (2011-2021). This include the Kiribati Shared Implementation plan (SHIP), the overarching plan which was endorsed late last year by Cabinet, and the UN Joint Plan which is currently being finalized.

11.5) Safenets have also been established on most Islands of Kiribati. The SafeNet is a committee that comprises of Government ministries, NGOs and Faith Based Organizations that provide frontline services to victims of domestic violence. The main objectives of the SafeNet are to ensure that victims are safe, organizations work in-line with Standard Procedures, refer cases to appropriate authorities and sharing of information and data. In 2014, a Gender project was set up, funded by the World Bank, to manage, coordinate and improve access to domestic violence services. In addition, working into addressing the issue of poor data collection by setting up systems to collect data on GBV and domestic violence cases.

11.6) Kiribati is also a member of the Pacific Islands Forum Reference Group to Address Sexual and Gender Based Violence. In 2013 the reference group facilitated a scoping assignment to research and propose appropriate methodology for costing the economic impact of violence against women in Kiribati. A socio economic impact costing of violence against women was conducted last year, a report from which is currently being finalised.

11.7) The formulation of the Children, Young People and Family Welfare Policy (CYPFW) to ensure that the best interests of children and families are fulfilled. The policy aims to protect children against abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.

11.8) The development of an Inclusive Education Policy which aims to support the:

a) provision of a flexible curriculum;

b) training of teachers to deliver educational programs and strategies;

c) compulsory education for all school aged children (at Primary and Junior Secondary) including children with special needs; and

d) recognition of parents’/caregivers’ role in all stages of their child’s education.

11.9) Kiribati has also undergone a Gender Stocktaking exercise conducted in September 2013 through the assistance of SPC. Recommended strategic actions out of this stocktaking include the strengthening of capacity for data collection and gender analysis of data and improving accountability and facilitate the monitoring of the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming.

11.10) This year, we have also worked hard to review our Gender Equality and Women’s Development Policy. Our main focus in this policy is to achieve gender equality. Our priorities are to create an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming, improve political representation and leadership, empower women economically, support stronger, informed families, and eliminate sexual and gender-based violence.

11.11) The drafting of the National Disability Policy. With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2013, my Government has drafted a national disability policy, now in progress, that will provide a national framework to guide all stakeholders and all communities to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, dismantle the barriers in society and raise awareness.

11.12) Under the Building Act 2006, the Building Code has been formulated by way of regulations to accommodate and provide more access to buildings and infrastructure by people with disabilities.

11.13) The development of a Kiribati Health Strategic Plan (2012–2015). The Strategic Plan sets the overall framework for action on health. The plan has been informed by a Health Needs Assessment, which examined the health needs of the I-Kiribati population and the ability of the health system to respond to these needs.

11.14) The Kiribati Integrated Environment Policy (KIEP) was approved by my Government in 2012 and publicly launched in 2013. The Policy identifies national environment priorities under 5 thematic areas – climate change, biodiversity, waste management and pollution control, resource management and environmental governance and seeks to inform the government and donors on the environment priorities that need to be addressed at the national level. The policy aims to achieve the protection and management of the environment and promotes our peoples resilience against the impacts of climate change.

11.15) The completion of the Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management. This Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan is designed to complement the National Disaster Risk Management Plan and the National Framework for Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation. In the context of Human Rights, the plan respects and promotes human rights by ensuring that all I-Kiribati have increased access to food security; safe water security and land security within the current and future threats of climate change and disasters such as sea level rise and droughts.

11.16) Establishing systems for mainstreaming of Human Rights into the work of all government ministries and departments administering and implementing national laws including the Constitution which is the supreme law in Kiribati. This includes the Kiribati National Human Rights Taskforce which was set up in July 2014 and the inclusion of a Human Rights Unit within my Ministry effective from this year 2015.

*Awareness and Consultations*

12. Mr. President, Kiribati is committed to address and increase the promotion and protection of human rights for our people. As mentioned earlier, this is entrenched in our own traditional system. So far, my Ministry, through its Women’s Development Division and Social Welfare Division has conducted awareness and consultations on Human Rights Conventions in collaboration with regional and international organizations. During the period of 2013- 2014, Human Rights trainings on CEDAW and ESGBV and consultations on the new Ministry and Family Peace Bill were conducted on 20 of the 22 inhabited islands of Kiribati. A direct outcome of this is the creation of a pool of Human Rights defenders and Male Advocates throughout Kiribati.

13. The Child Protection legislation reform was the outcome of the participation and partnership between Government and all Stakeholders. The Technical Working Group, established in 2010, continue to work with representatives from NGOs and Faith Based Organizations.

14. Awareness programmes on the Children, Young People and Family Welfare (CYPFW) legislation and policy has been conducted in nine islands including the capital, Tarawa, where over 50% (more than 50,000 people - 2010 population census report) of the population resides. The rest of the islands in the country will be visited this year.

15. During the CYPFW legislation and policy consultations, community members were trained to become Child Protection Advocates.

16. Under Section 18 (1) and (2) of the CYPFW Act 2013, any person is mandated to report concerns to the Police and Welfare Officers about the wellbeing of a child or young persons including children undergoing and suffering from corporal punishments both in the community and in schools.

17. The Youth Justice Bill is being drafted and the final version will be submitted to Cabinet by the end of March 2015.

18. The Kiribati National Human Rights Task Force is now attending to long pending Reports for CEDAW and CRC and to submit the initial and 2nd and 3rdconsolidated periodic CEDAW Reports in April 2015. The CRC consolidated 2nd, 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports will also be submitted in June 2015. The Task Force will also compile and submit the CRPD initial Report by the due date in 2015.

19. Mr. President, the creation of the new Ministry for Women, Youth and social Affairs and the establishment of the Human Rights Task Force and Human Rights Unit places Kiribati in a better position to progress work on Human Rights in Kiribati and in particular speed up the process of future Periodic Reports on the ratified conventions.

20. In relation to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a workshop has been held with all mayors in Kiribati while the Disability Persons Organization, Te Toa Matoa (NGO), has carried out awareness raising programs in some islands in Kiribati.

21. Mr. President, I strongly believe that we have gone a long way. Our 2nd UPR report has addressed recommendations of the first report. It also highlights what we have done and our plans to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and the implementation of national obligations under human rights related conventions that was initiated when its first report was adopted. We will continue to work in cooperation with the OHCHR and to seek support from UN Agencies, regional bodies and development partners in building national capacity, training and exchanging human rights expertise and experiences with other Pacific Island countries.

*Challenges and vulnerabilities*

22. Mr. President, while proud of our achievements, it is important to also highlight the many challenges we face in the implementation, ratification and reporting on human rights conventions. We are making slow progress in achieving internationally set goals such as the MDG’s. Amongst them are challenges from isolation, over population, lack of data, and access to rights and services. The smallness of our islands and their geographic dispersion across a large ocean area, makes access, and the exorbitant cost of replicating services, a major challenge. Further support is required in building local capacity and strengthening and resourcing existing structures and bodies that play a key role in human rights implementation and reporting.

*Climate change – the human right to survival*

23. Mr. President, in our report this year, we have highlighted the major challenge we face from climate change. As a nation of low lying islands, with average elevation of our islands above sea level of only 2 meters, climate change and the resultant sea level rise has added new and major challenges for us, including loss of territory, severe coastal erosion, involuntary displacement of our communities, and affecting food and water security. But more importantly Mr. President, it has become a survival issue for our people.

24. Kiribati welcomes the upcoming full day discussion on Human Rights and Climate Change during the 28th session of the Human Rights Council scheduled for March 6 2015. We encourage small states to take this opportunity to share their views on the challenges and best practices in addressing the adverse effects of climate change and human rights. We call upon the international community to continue to support the increased participation of small states in particular those that do not have representation in Geneva in the discussions on these important issues that are taking place in the Human Rights Council.

25. We cannot really talk and report on human rights without addressing these challenges from Climate change to low lying nations like mine, how it is affecting the very basic human right for our people as a distinct culture to survive, the right and access to clean drinking water, to food and the right to have islands that we can call our homes.

26. We are doing what we can to adapt. However, what happens when we can no longer adapt. We are buying land offshore, we are focusing on education and upskilling our people to prepare them to be able to “migrate with dignity, “when our islands are no longer habitable. We initiated and are now part of the Coalition of Low-lying Atoll Nations on Climate Change (CANCC), a coalition of the most vulnerable nations to climate change. We welcome and appreciate assistance from our development partners, but much more needs to be done. We cannot do it alone.

27. Mr. President, climate change and sea level rise is a global problem. We may be on the frontline now, together with other low-lying countries like Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Maldives and Tokelau, but so are the scores of millions of people in our region and around the world living in low lying coastal cities, towns and village communities.

28. Mr. President, who do we appeal and turn to for our peoples’ right to survive? Who reports on the rights of these vulnerable people to climate change including my own?

29. I therefore call for urgent regional and global action to help Island States like ours in our effort to make human rights for all, a reality. My Government is strongly committed to upholding and ensuring the Human Rights of its people. This is our responsibility. We take the UPR process seriously. We acknowledge and will take careful note of the comments made in this session. We will consider and continue to work hard in meeting our human rights obligations.

30. But this UPR process Mr President will amount to nothing if other major challenges posing serious violations of the basic human right of our people to survive are not addressed as well in this human rights body.

31. If there is a challenge on human rights that we need to all work together on, Climate Change IS THE ONE. I challenge this Working Group and the Human Rights Council to focus and catalyze global action to address this major challenge to the right to survive, not only for us but for the global community; as it has done so well on the rights of individuals, women’s rights, gender equality, the rights of the child, the rights of the disabled, freedom of speech, worship and association.

32. To conclude, I wish to bestow upon you our Kiribati traditional blessings of Te Mauri Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa. (Good Health, Peace and Prosperity to you all)

Thank you and Kam bati n Rabwa!