



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR TEBURORO TITO

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Theme: "Scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, partnerships and solutions"

Thank you distinguished Chair for giving me the floor,
President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Secretary General of the United Nations.

Our two gracious hosts President of Portugal and President of Kenya
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the People and the Government of Kiribati I am delighted to greet you all
with blessings for good health, "Kam na bane n mauri"

I am truly honored to deliver this statement and I do so in alignment with the statement of
the Pacific Small Islands Developing States.

At the outset let me acknowledge with gratitude the wonderful organization of this
important gathering and the gracious hospitality of the Government and people of
Portugal.

Chair

Kiribati is happy to share as it had done so in previous years in Ocean gatherings of this
kind that the health and wealth of the ocean is crucial to the livelihood, wellbeing and

development of people and especially those living on tiny small islands surrounded by oceans many times larger than the islands themselves. For instance, Kiribati is made up of 99.99% of water, it is therefore crucial for island people like us, especially those of us not having enough land with adequate fertility for food production, that the health and wealth of the surrounding seas and ocean are center staged in meetings of this kind.

In our old nature-friendly and communal ways of life that were practiced prior to the advent of industrialization and globalization, based on the cash economy and an individualistic view of life, we had observed and followed the wisdom of our forefathers which kept reminding u not to take more than what we basically need from nature as it would hurt mother nature and might deprive other people from having their needs met. There was always more than enough fish and sea resources for the need of everyone and the seas and oceans continued to provide an abundant supply of fish and other marine resources. However, with the emergence of the modern cash-based economy, a new mind set emerged leading to the abandonment of the conservative and nature friendly approaches, resulting in the unrestrained exploitation of sea and ocean to satisfy the desire of a few, with the means and capacity, wishing to become wealthy and powerful in the shortest time possible.

This “fishing for profit” mode of operation has led to the emergence of one of the worst form sea terrorism called the IUU particularly of the type organized by billion dollar multinational fishing industries and their networks which are so overwhelmingly powerful for any small island state or even groups of small island states to grapple with, thus constituting one of the most dangerous threats not only to the health and wealth of the oceans but also to the livelihood, wellbeing and development of the islands people. This is just as evil and dangerous to the future of the oceans and humanity as climate-change, Covid-19, terrorism, human and drug trafficking to name a few and must therefore be relentlessly fought, dismantled and eliminated from the face of the oceans if we really are serious about saving our oceans from the human made perils of our time.

Pursuant to the global drive to promote the health and wealth of the oceans in line with SDG14, the people of Kiribati have tried hard to maintain the conservative and nature friendly ways of fishing in the face of growing pressures and temptations to adopt the profit- driven approach. Kiribati's creation about ten years ago of the largest and deepest no take marine sanctuary in the central and most ecologically rich part of its huge EEZ located around its 8 islands in its Phoenix archipelago known as the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) spanning over an ocean area of over 410,000sqkm, the size of the state of California, was a further testament of Kiribati's deep commitment to strengthen the health and wealth of the ocean. Such a bold and unprecedented move was envisaged to contribute to the re-stocking of the Pacific marine wildlife and biodiversity for the benefit of not only the neighboring Pacific countries and peoples but also for the entire world where, for health and other reasons, more and more of them have shifted from animal to fish meat much of which comes from fish caught in the Pacific Ocean. However, since the no take marine reserve has prevented Kiribati from maximizing its fishing license revenue for its budgetary needs, the Government has decided to review its marine conservation approach by adopting a marine spatial planning (MSP) mode in order to maximize the fishing revenue from the sale of fishing access rights to the Distant Water Fishing Nations, which access fees currently account for more than 50% of the Government's annual revenue. These fishing access rights are sold out to DWFNs using the vessel days scheme (VDS) as sub-regionally formulated and agreed by the eight tuna rich countries of the Pacific that constitute what is now known as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) group comprising, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and my country Kiribati.

Mr. President

Our theme for this important conference, aligns well with Kiribati Vision for 20 Years Plan (KV20), which sees innovative and sustainable transformation of our ocean resources, as a meaningful approach to create a wealthier, healthier and more prosperous nation for the people of Kiribati that would eventually lead to the achievement of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals that the world agreed on in 2015.

Since the ocean provides abundant resources that continues to support our economy, our culture and our future, the Government of Kiribati is determined to continue its commitments on ocean related management efforts. As a custodian of one of the top twenty largest ocean spaces on earth, and one of the most resilient and diverse coral and underwater jungles of the planet, Kiribati will continue to lead efforts in Championing the Commonwealth's Action Group for Coastal Fisheries blue Charter.

Climate Change

Kiribati believes that the effects of climate change threaten the health and wealth of our ocean. Are leading to many changes to the health of our ocean. Climate change will continue to threaten the very survival and future of our people. The solution to this challenge is beyond the capacity of any single nation and must tackled in solidarity and collaboration with others and with availability of extensive resources, capacity building, greening of marine vessels to maintain a sustainable sea transportation given the geographical remoteness of our islands.

Plastics waste and marine pollution

Kiribati believes that the fight against plastic pollution is urgently needed. To this end, we have put in place a Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy of 2020 to 2030. Kiribati commitments in tackling plastic waste and plastic pollutions is evident through its membership to the Basel Convention which now allows recognition of the inclusion of plastic waste as one of the items to be regulated.

Ocean conservation

Ocean conservation across the Pacific and our SIDS region is evolving, with evolving norms and unprecedented challenges that affects the component of our development agenda. We cannot protect our ocean from marine litter and pollution, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, as we need the necessary resources, partnership and strong

support underscored by mutual understanding and respect. Yet we are optimistic that we can deliver solutions to preserve the integrity of our islands and ecosystems through broader collaboration and through urgent and innovative rehabilitation measures, so our conservation efforts are wholly inclusive and holistic.

Conclusion

Finally, let me close by sharing to you the first verses of a new Ocean Song that I composed two nights ago at a reception hosted by Peace Boat where I was greatly inspired by the many good people from the different walks of life, I met on the Peace Boat, from the NGOs, CSOs, the youth activists, the scientists, shared academia, the iconic film stars and the philanthropists who made very moving presentations and shared their extraordinary visions of the future. The lyrics of the new ocean song reads as follows:

**“We are one big happy family
For an ocean fresh and clean,
in a planet blue and green.
We are one big happy family God’s family are we.
We are all humans,
brothers and sisters
Our father in heaven
loves each one of us.”**

Finally let me bestow upon each one of you our traditional blessing,

“Te Mauri, Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa which means Health, Peace, and Prosperity on us all”

I thank you.

