



Republic of Kiribati

H.E Te Beretitenti statement at the 7th Session of UNCAC Conference of State Parties, Opening session Monday 6th Nov, 2017

Mr Chairman

Distinguished speakers – Your Excellences

Distinguished delegates

And all Friends

I bring to you from my Government and people – the people of Kiribati's warm greetings – KAM NA BANE N MAURI.

At the outset, let me thank this Qatar event's organizers for inviting me to say few remarks on the most important topic – UNCAC and the Integrity, Transparency and Anti-Corruption Preventive Policies, which my Government strongly supports.

Let me also thank the Government of Qatar for organizing this event during which I am happy to share our experiences and my views on the topic in relation to the situation of Kiribati, as one of the Small Island Developing States.

Corruption can be seen and understood in many ways. For me, I believe that corruption is endemic and complex and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to apply; that corruption is a dangerous human behavior virus which can also cost lives. And because it is a shared problem, and is profoundly shaped by each country's own socio-economic institutions, location and level of development it is important for countries, especially SIDS like Kiribati, to develop their comprehensive national anti-corruption strategies and policies to prevent and fight corruption.

My Government, since we took over the national office in March 2016, has implemented its ambitious development strategy aiming to improve the living standards and wellbeing of all I-Kiribati people. For the first time ever in the history of Kiribati, my Government has adopted a longer term planning approach and we have developed our 20-year-plan document – called the Kiribati Vision 20, in short the KV-20. My Government has embarked on this journey through its ambitious transformative 20-year Vision for Kiribati (KV20) towards a wealthy, healthy and secure nation based on accelerated growth and strategic investment in our human, natural and cultural capital, in particular creating Kiribati as a corrupt free society by the year 2036. The KV20 is underpinned by the principles of good governance and transparency. In particular, my Government has agreed on the very ambitious goal to create Kiribati as a corrupt-free society by the year 2036.

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In achieving this long term goal, my Government had developed its National Anti-Corruption Strategy which would serve as the Government blueprint to guide and oversee the whole of Government and whole of nation actions against climate change/corruption. I would also acknowledge the support of UNODC and UNDP through the UN Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption project in the development of this National Anti-Corruption Strategy. To share the experience of Kiribati in developing its strategy in the context of the overall national development plan, my Government recognized during the formulation of its national anti-corruption strategy:

- The importance of taking strong leadership in the development of national anti-corruption strategy by having my Public Service Office take the lead in coordinating the implementation of this strategy;
- The adoption of a very national, consultative, inclusive and multi-stakeholder partnership processes in the formulation of the strategy;
- The need to fight and prevent corruption in the public sector, with the national institutional and capacity building and law reforms aiming to strengthen criminalization and anti-corruption laws' enforcement;
- The importance of fighting corruption through the education system and imparting values of integrity to children throughout their education, in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions; and
- Finally, acknowledging the fact that the Government alone cannot tackle corruption and that it is necessary to work with all stakeholders in society to eradicate corruption, including the general public, civil society, the media, the private sector, and religious and community organizations.

In addition to the development of our national anti-corruption strategy, my government had also set up the Leadership Commission following the passing of the Leadership Code Act in 2016. This Commission will be operational from early next year, 2018. The Commissioners have been appointed and their role is to oversight all leaders including those in Government. Last week, the Government convened a national summit during which the national anti-corruption strategy was presented and discussed.

As part of an effort to implement the national anti-corruption strategy successfully, my government will convene early next year the national high-level panel discussion which is aimed at involving all leaders - including heads of churches, the business community and private sector, NGOs and political parties, women and youth representatives - to agree to a national political declaration on preventing and fighting corruption.

Kiribati has and continues to struggle and face a lot of challenges in achieving sustainable development and its own national development aspirations, especially in terms of good governance, rule of law and addressing climate change. This is due to our limited resources and weak administrative capacity.

However my Government is working much harder to find practical and innovative solutions to overcome long-standing and inevitable challenges which include a narrow economic base with stagnant growth, low and poor GDP, a rapidly increasing population trend, escalating youth unemployment, a Non-Communicable Diseases health endemic and most tragically – the detrimental impact of climate change. Recognizing that corruption is a hindrance to achieve national sustainable development, Kiribati is focussed on eliminating corruption before it can strive to achieve sustainable development.

So I believe this event demonstrates the importance of sharing good practices in the development and implementation of national anti-corruption strategies and policies here at the biennial meeting of States parties, as well as at the regional level and in other international fora, as more and more States seek to develop and implement effective strategies that will strengthen integrity, transparency and accountability in public institutions, the private sector and the general public.

Therefore, I urge all States parties present this afternoon at this special event to continue your efforts in implementing the UNCAC through developing and strengthening integrity, transparency and anti-corruption preventive policies.

Kiribati is very much interested to work in partnership with the Government of Qatar in its effort to demonstrate the importance of integrity, transparency and anti-corruption preventive policies in achieving the sustainable development goals and its own national development aspirations.

In conclusion, I thank again the Government of Qatar and the organizers for having this great opportunity to speak on this very important issue. And while on this note, it would be a remiss on my part if I do not thank again the Government of Qatar for having funded our recently ended national consultation on the KV-20 which Governance is one of the pillars which was discussed.

My traditional blessings of Te Mauri (Health), Teraoi (Peace) and Tabemoa (Prosperity).