

Statement on the occasion of
High Level Segment of CSD-12
Delivered by
Hon Nabuti Mwmemwenikarawa
Minister of Finance and Economic Development
on behalf of the
Government of the Republic of KIRIBATI

Chairman Brenden

Your Excellencies and distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring greetings of the New Government and the people of Kiribati and like other delegations I would like to thank you for the kind invitation extended to the Government of Kiribati to come and participate in this high level segment of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

In formulating the National Development Strategy (NDS) for 2004-07, the Kiribati government intends to reduce poverty of opportunity for Kiribati in terms of improving and enhancing the quality of life and ensuring a fair distribution of goods and services in accordance with the principles of good governance. Good governance helps to mobilize scarce resources to their best alternative use, and promotes sustainable development. As I understand, CSD-12 is meant to review what UN countries have done with regard to these three thematic issues namely water, sanitation and human settlements since Rio in 1992 and WSSD in Johannesburg, 2002. Mainstreaming these three thematic issues in the development planning process is therefore a necessary condition for improving the welfare and ensuring a better distribution of resources to the people and society at large. However, due to time constraint, I will confine my statement to talk on water and sanitation.

The need for improved capacity to manage water resources in a sustainable manner in Kiribati, is recognized as being of fundamental importance to sustainable economic growth and improvement in public health, living conditions and the environment.

Kiribati is a country of atoll islands and the issues of water resources, sanitation and human settlements are inextricably linked. The economic and public health implications of degraded and depleted water supplies and poor sanitation are far-reaching.

For our villages and urban areas of our capital, South Tarawa, the problems associated with providing adequate water supply and sanitation are many: the limited trained staff, basic data and information, infrastructure and legislation. In turn these problems are a significant constraint to sustainable development.

Our deep concern about the potential impacts of global warming, climatic variability and sea-level rise highlights the need for water resource monitoring in my country. The inadequacy of legislation, education and awareness leaves resources unprotected and expose the community to the risk of water shortages and contamination.

The problems of maintaining existing urban and rural water supply systems have led to low levels of success. Projects often fail due to the lack of expertise in dealing appropriately with our circumstances.

At the national level, we are endeavouring to incorporate water and sanitation issues in the current NDS and ministerial operational plans (MOPs), as they are essential ingredients and necessary conditions for:

- Promoting economic growth through facilitating demand and supply of goods and services;
- Ensuring a fair distribution by improving better access to everyone both in urban and rural sectors of society;
- Improving public sector performance through better use of water and improved sanitation;

- Equipping people to manage through training, education and advocacy;
- Encouraging conservation and better management of physical and social assets which embody public health and environmental protective standards; and
- Helping to ensure a sustainable use of financial resources by adopting an integrated approach in the management of water and sanitation.

The Kiritimati Water and Sanitation Project (KWASP) funded by AusAID and SAPHE project, which stands for sanitation and public health and environment, and funded by ADB through a concessional loan facility are good examples of Kiribati responses to these global commitments. The SAPHE project is a classic example that clearly demonstrates Kiribati's preparedness to fall back on loan funds when donors consulted at that time were unprepared to take on extra commitments outside their own budgetary package. The amount of soft loan taken was US\$10 million and it is quite understandable to us that donors have their own commitments and priorities that may not necessarily be the same as ours, the recipient countries. And when this anomalous situation comes up then there is nothing we can do about it to the extent that we have to make a decision of: either taking up the loan or drop the project and be ready to bear the cost on our own.

Mr. Chairman, I believe there is a need to promote a more genuine partnership and extensive consultations with all stakeholders. It is also important to mention at this stage that the implementation of these two water and sanitation projects is not at all straightforward. For instance, there is a cultural problem with the sanitation component since the community is not ready to accept the use of compost facilities despite the numerous promotional efforts already undertaken by the project.

Furthermore, there is water and sanitation related issues that are still in the planning and implementation stages. These include:

- Financing of public investment in transport and utilities;
- Establishing similar utility infrastructure in the outer islands;
- Creating awareness for the potential cost and risks for climate change (and this is becoming a real phenomenon and threat to small island countries. The Kiribati

Adaptation Project (KAP) which is funded by the Japanese government and the World Bank Group) is a pilot project to reflect this concern and

- Strengthening the monitoring and enforcement systems.

These are expected to come out clearly in the Ministerial Operational Plans (MOPs), which are in their final stage of completion. Earlier in the year and just before we came to this convention, my Ministry organized seminars on the Barbados Plan of Action (BPOA) plus 10 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the intention that these two broad global programmes are mainstreamed in the planning processes. Kiribati is endeavouring with its limited resources to make commitments that is expected of us from these two global declarations, with the assistance of some donor partners to build and strengthen the capacity of our local manpower.

Mr. Chairman, while Kiribati government has made some reasonable progress in mainstreaming water and sanitation issues in the planning process since Rio and Johannesburg, there are still considerable challenges to consider which, among others, include:

- Lack of financing sources;
- Need for genuine partnerships at all levels;
- Need for more education and training
- Lack of clarity and relevance of these global goals, and
- Need to manage change, and
- Need for effective coordination

The list is not exhaustive but these are the ones I consider important for the purpose of this presentation and I welcome the comments from the respective audience.

Before closing, Kiribati is pleased to associate itself with both the statement made by the distinguished Minister of the Environment from New Zealand, who is currently the Chairman of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the Joint Caribbean-Pacific Programme for Action on Water and Climate (JPfA).

Thank you, Mr. Chairman