



**GOVERNMENT OF KIRIBATI
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**Statement of Honourable Minister Ruateki Tekaiara
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development
On the 50th Session of the Committee on World Food Security
10th October 2022, FAO Headquarter Rome.**

- Excellencies
- Distinguished Delegates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

In his Almighty name, allow me to share with you our Kiribati traditional blessings, ‘Kam na bane ni Mauri’ meaning ‘May you all be blessed’

It is indeed an honour and privilege to speak on behalf of the Government and the People of the Republic of Kiribati to express our gratitude to the Committee on World Food Security in allowing Kiribati to become the new member and to participate in this important meeting. As a Government Minister of Agriculture, it is within my responsibility to ensure that the challenges we faced would be heard on the international stage and to join hand in hand with global communities to secure the future of our People.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Making a difference in Food Security and Nutrition” is a timely theme for this auspicious gathering. Globally we are all facing food crisis due to

climate change impacts, Covid19 pandemic, Conflict in Ukraine, and protracted crises around the world.

Distinguished Delegates,

In June this year, Kiribati declared a state of emergency due to the prolonged drought that affects the entire Country. Being a low-lying atoll island, our underground water, where we are highly dependent on, as our main and only source of water, was prone to high salinity from droughts and sea inundation thus affecting our food crops and animals which threaten our food security. COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates food insecurity and the inequalities among our people due to the unequal distribution of wealth. In addressing this, Kiribati provides in-kind and cash safety nets that varies among vulnerable groups of people, communities.

Our rising Population coupled with the challenging unfriendly environment for agriculture production exacerbated our dependency on imported foods that are less nutritious but are more affordable and convenient. This change in the diets of our people or the high dependency on imported foods made them vulnerable to global food crisis as well as to Non-Communicable Diseases putting our people's life at risk.

According to the UNICEF's statistical report, the health of our children under five years of age are stunted, wasted and overweight, together with our women aged between 15 to 49 years being affected by anaemia and the Non-Communicable-Diseases cases portrays Kiribati to be among the top countries in the Pacific region with these diseases. While

supplementing vitamins and iron pills is an easy to do program to address these diseases, it is a costly undertaking. However, through the technical and financial assistance of our development partners, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services together with my Ministry – the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development initiate an inclusive home garden program where people including the vulnerable groups – women and youths are targeted and prioritized as beneficiaries. Such program engaged people to actively changed their ways of idleness and become more active doing physical gardening to grow their own nutritious foods.

Mr. Chairperson

The 2022 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World emphasizes the repurposing food and agricultural policy support to make healthy diets more affordable” through reducing the cost of nutritious foods relative to other foods and people’s income. Noting the commitment of CFS to strive for a world free hunger in accelerating actions on SDG 2, Kiribati is also committed and work alongside this vision to end hunger in all forms.

Kiribati also recognizes the importance of Gender inclusiveness by means of engaging youths, young girls, and women in our agricultural programs. However, knowing the lack of interest of young people in agriculture, our programs are devised in an innovative manner to try attracting and engaging them.

The Voluntary Guidelines developed for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of own National Food Security –

these are very welcomed by Kiribati as we note of the different contexts of countries

Kiribati is in supportive to the work of CFS on its Data collection and analysis tool for food and nutrition security disaggregated by sex, age and disabilities. The World Food Program introduced the mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping (mVAM) to our Agriculture Department during the drought. The tool assesses our vulnerability during the drought to provide evidence-based data for informing preparedness and anticipatory action. Recognizing the usefulness of such data collection and analytical tools, Kiribati reiterates its support to these useful tools.

Mr Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

In conclusion, allow me to say our appreciations. Foremost, Kiribati is appreciative to the Committee for the acceptance of our membership to this Committee. I can assure you that Kiribati will perform its part as an active and responsible member to implement and fulfill the vision of this Committee for the benefit of all.

Further, Kiribati wishes to take this opportunity to thank FAO, WFP and IFAD for the assistance provided through funded projects and programs and its presence in our Pacific region. We believe that learning and knowing our context well would deliver a solution to our unique challenges.

Kiribati would like to thank the metropolitan Governments such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China and the United States who have provided support in one way or another whether its our human resources capacity or facilities and equipment and the like.

In ending, I wish you all the best in your deliberations on this 50th Session of the Committee and to bestow upon us all, the Kiribati traditional blessing of Te Mauri Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa meaning Good Health, Peace and Prosperity.

Thank you for your attention.