



Statement by the President of Kiribati, HE Anote Tong

on the occasion of the 29th Special Session of the General Assembly on the Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD beyond 2014 22 September, 2014 New York

Salutation

UN Secretary General Mr. Baan Ki Moon,
President Kutesa, President of the 69th UN General Assembly
Fellow Leaders and speakers
Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA
Treasured partners and conveners of today's event
Friends in development,
Members of the audience
Distinguished delegates and participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Opening remarks

Ladies and gentlemen allow me to start by sharing with all of you our traditional greeting of 'Kam na bane ni Mauri'. Health to each and everyone here.

Ladies and gentlemen, 20 years has passed since Cairo and we can all agree that much has been done and achieved as reflected in the recent Global ICPD Beyond 2014 Review. However, as also reflected in the Global ICPD Beyond 2014 Review, more needs to be done. Inequitable distribution of the gains from the 1994 Programme of Action remains a key challenge, a challenge compounded by the ever-changing landscape of global development, the ever changing needs and demands of our societies and peoples. It is indeed a challenge that in my view is each and everyone's responsibility, our responsibility, our moral obligation to address.

Ladies and gentlemen, very clear and consistent messages emerged from all countries studied under the Global ICPD Beyond 2014 Review. These include the urgent need to eradicate all forms of inequalities, the importance of reflecting our population demographics and dynamics in our development agenda and recognizing that investing in our people, young, old, women and girls, men and boys is paramount. For the underlying message conveyed in Cairo remains valid today as it did 20 years ago. It is not about the numbers, but it is about the people. It is about you and I. It is about our children and their children's children.

Ladies and gentlemen, our leaders in 1994 were innovative and courageous enough to formulate and advocate the 1994 Cairo Program of Action. We as leaders of today need to ensure that we continue with what is just and what is right for our people, our people in the global sense. For what is important and what was reflected 20 years ago and continues to be reflected today, is that our responsibility is not limited to the borders that define who we are as a nation, but should encompass who we are as global citizens of this one global village.

Investing in our people, means investing in the future of our future generation. It is investing in ensuring that our children and their children live a life without prejudice, a life with the ability to make informed choices, a life where such choices are facilitated and supported by the services available to them, a life without barriers to what is rightfully due to them as basic necessities of life, a life they can call their own and does not adversely impact others or is being adversely impacted by others.

Furthermore investing in our people, underlines the strong linkages with the need to preserve our environment for our future generation, the paramount need to ensure that our one planet Earth is preserved to be able to sustain the lives of future generations to come. I am sure you all agree with me that this is what underscores sustainable and inclusive development policies. This is what underscores investing in upholding individual human rights, capabilities and dignity.

Our world of today is as diverse as our world of yesterday – where diversity ranges from our development progress, our diverse economic growth, our diverse population demographics, just to name a few.

However, such diversity should not be the divisive factor in our global development. It should be the all-encompassing factor as I am sure you will all agree with me that we have reached the stage in our global development where we can no longer ignore the intricate linkages between our individual national development paths with that of the world as a whole.

For to ignore such intricate linkages is to ignore our fellow global citizens who are and will become marginalized, who are and will become vulnerable through no choice of theirs but for the simple fact of where they are and who they are.

I have just returned from the Arctic region which has given me a clearer insight on how the melting of these massive sheets of ice in the Arctic region due to climate change will not only have a severe impact on life in the region but will also result in the demise of future generations on the other side of the globe. In particular our most vulnerable atoll island nations, which calls for immediate and urgent action on Climate Change. Climate Change is indeed a human right and human dignity issue. Acknowledging it as such will be advocating the ICPD beyond 2014's goal of: 'To ensure sustainable development by placing the human rights of all people and individual well-being at the heart of the future development agenda'

The future of our people, the future of our world will depend on visionary and innovative leadership. Leadership that understands and acknowledges the barriers and the challenges to equitable distribution of gains, and most importantly takes the necessary steps to address such challenges and barriers.

What is discussed today, is very much relevant to the discussions that will take place tomorrow during the Climate Change summit and the general debate that follows. The Millennium Development Goals have guided us to where we are now, and we certainly will support the post 2015 Development Goals that not only build on the Millennium Development Goals, but is also reflective of the challenges we face today, embracing and channelling the diversity of the world into sustainable and inclusive development agendas.

Ladies and gentlemen it is a must that we act now and that we work hand in hand to achieve our ICPD goals beyond 2014. Strong leadership from the United Nations is key and I take this opportunity to commend the United Nations Secretary General and the Executive Director of the UNFPA in advocating visionary and all-encompassing Program of Actions that include not just the challenges of yesterday, but the challenges of today and tomorrow, such as climate change, in the post 2015 Development Goals.

Before I conclude allow me to extend my gratitude to the UNFPA for enabling my participation with my delegation here, and for organizing this special session.

With these few words, let me close by sharing with you all our traditional blessing of Te Mauri Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa!. Health, Peace and Prosperity to each and everyone of us.