



Statement by

Vice President of Kiribati, Honourable Ms Teima Onorio

For the

57th Commission on the Status of Women

Theme: Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women and Girls

Madam Chair

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

1. I am indeed honored to address this august 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of my country Kiribati and bring you warm greetings this morning..
Kam na mauri.
2. We from Kiribati fully support and align ourselves with the Pacific Islands Forum Statement (to be) delivered by the Prime Minister of Tuvalu on the priority theme: Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Madam Chair

3. Kiribati is a small Pacific country of 33 islands, 16 of which are inhabited by a total population of over 103,000 people who are predominantly young and female. (Kiribati is also a Least Developed Country). The priority theme for this Commission Session is pertinent to Kiribati for several reasons, one being its demography.
4. More importantly, the Family Health and Support Study of 2008 revealed an alarming prevalence of sexual and gender based violence in Kiribati affecting 68% of our women between the ages of 15 to 49. Such prevalence rate of violence means significant consequences and impact not only on the health of our Kiribati women and girls but also on their families and their livelihood as well. Such violence also hinders social and economic development and reduces productivity.

Madam Chair

5. I am pleased however to highlight here some measures and actions that my country Kiribati has taken since the Study of 2008, in the fight towards the elimination and prevention of violence against women in girls in Kiribati.
6. To begin with, Kiribati continues to have political commitment at the very top. President Anote Tong readily launched the initial findings of the 2008 Study in December of the same year, at the State House where he committed to a whole of government approach to eliminating violence against women and children in Kiribati. What was once treated as a very private matter is now a public issue gaining strong commitment from government

with the support of civil society to address elimination of violence and empowerment of women in our communities. This top political commitment was again evident in our Government's Policy Statement for this new term 2012-2015 and is reflected as well in the current Kiribati Development Plan.

7. It is important to note here that Kiribati ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995 and the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2004. These instruments have helped pave the way for Kiribati to take measures in these areas.

Madam Chair

8. I am pleased to report that in December 2008 also, Parliamentarians in their discussion of a motion on domestic violence gave bipartisan high support for the enactment of laws and other measures aimed at reducing, if not, complete elimination of domestic violence that affect women and children.
9. At Parliament session in December 2012, Parliamentarians again gave overwhelming support to the First Reading of our Government Bill on child protection. This **Child, Young People and Family Welfare Bill** which awaits hearing at the Committee Stage and Second Reading at the April Session this year, aims to cater for the protection of children under 13 years old. Another bill, **the Family Peace Bill**, has been drafted and is now ready for community level consultations. This draft bill aims to address all forms of violence against women.
10. Government has also decided to reintroduce a Constitutional Reform Bill in the forthcoming Parliament session in April to facilitate further support to gender, children and human rights issues through the establishment of a new ministry. Currently these are being addressed by the Women Development Division.

Madam chair

11. On the policy side, Government has approved the Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence (ESGBV) Policy as well as National Action Plan 2011-2021 and more recently, the Child, Young People and Family Welfare Policy. In approving both policies, Government acknowledges the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration and the important roles that Non Government Organizations and Faith based organizations play in addressing violence against women and children.
12. In addition, the Ministry of Labour has drafted a Gender Access and Equality Policy and Implementation Plan for the years 2013 – 2016. This policy has adopted a rights based approach and promotes zero tolerance for sexual harassment in workplaces and training institutions.

13. A draft policy on Gender equality and Women Development Policy focuses on creating an enabling environment for gender mainstreaming, economic empowerment, access to services and the advancement of women.

Madam Chair

14. Action on the ground has seen among others, the institutionalization of domestic violence within the Police training curriculum and establishment of 2 units with the Police Service to deal specifically with domestic violence cases and the building of safe communities.
15. In addition, task forces have been set up to coordinate and monitor gender based violence activities while one focuses its work on the violence against women legislation.

Madam chair

16. Access to multi sectoral services and responses for all women and girls is crucial. In Kiribati, Government, through the **SafeNet**, its partnership with faith based organizations and civil societies, provides free services to assist survivors of sexual and gender based violence, namely women and girls. These services include a 24-hour hotline by the police, referrals for custody, court orders, counseling and medical treatment. Such services are guided by Standard Operating procedures which service providers on the 2 urban islands of Tarawa and Kiritimati have been trained in. Such support services need to be extended to the rest of country to reach women and girls affected in those islands. The continued support of the international community, while acknowledged with gratitude, would be appreciated, to help resource and support similar networks throughout the nation.

Madam chair,

17. Kiribati also recognizes the important role that men and boys play in addressing violence against Women and girls and continues to support programs that engage men and boys at all levels of advocacy and leadership on EVAW. We are happy to note that some initiatives such as Black Thursday has gained popularity in our community, amongst school children, Government Ministries and companies. Further work needs to be done in this area to gage fuller support of men and boys throughout the nation.
18. More recently, Kiribati has received the kind support of UNWomen with funding by AusAID, towards a 1-year preparatory assistance project which aims at drafting a 5-year UN Joint Programme (UNJP) for Eliminating Sexual and Gender Based Violence (ESGBV) in Kiribati. The project focuses on building capacity of the key stakeholders to enable them to be in a better position to implement the policy more effectively and efficiently. It also provides funding support for victims of domestic violence through the

Welfare and Counselling Unit and the sole Crisis Centre that has and continues to provide shelter and counseling for women and girls survivors of violence.

Madam Chair

19. We recognize the many challenges that face us in Kiribati. Among them are the barriers of isolation, little understanding of the impacts of Gender based violence, lack of women's empowerment, opportunities and climate change. However, the Kiribati Government is committed to work in collaboration with key stakeholders in overcoming these barriers. Further support is required in building capacity and strengthening and resourcing existing bodies that are dealing with violence against women, implementation of the EVAW policies and legislation, human rights implementation and reporting. Support from the international community in these areas would be highly appreciated.

20. Please allow me now to take this opportunity to thank all of our regional and international partners, relevant CSOs and NGOs, who have assisted us in Kiribati in our efforts to eliminate Violence against women and girls. With your kind support we have made some progress.

Let us continue to work together to eliminate violence against women and girls so that the world indeed becomes a better place for us all to live in.

21. In conclusion, may I wish you all our traditional Kiribati blessings of **Te Mauri, Te Raoi ao te Tabomoa**. Health, peace and prosperity to you all.

I thank you for your attention.

