



HIS EXCELLENCY TE BERETITENTI TANETI MAAMAU

POLICY STATEMENT 2016

(2nd Meeting of the 11th Parliament – 25th April to 10th May, 2016)

Honorable Speaker and your good spouse
Chief Justice and your good spouse
Vice President and your good spouse
Cabinet Ministers and your spouses
Honorable Members of Parliament,
Our Partners in our Development Aspirations,
The People of Kiribati Wherever you are

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Kam Na Bane Ni Mauri

Before I start, I would like to give thanks to our Lord Almighty God for his love and blessings upon us all and for his guidance to Kiribati during the recently concluded Presidential elections on the 9th March, 2016 according us the privilege and honour to serve our nation which we humbly accept with our commitment as a Government and as a Party to do so to the best of our ability.

I would also like to extend our appreciation to the previous Governments from when we attained Independence for all that you have done for the people of Kiribati that has brought us to where we are today. With your permission, Honorable Speaker let us give them a round of applause in acknowledgement of all that they have done.

Before I go any further, I would like to request that we take a minute of silence to honor those Australian and New Zealand soldiers and all who have given their lives for the preservation of peace worldwide.

Thank you and it is with great honor and privilege that I table this Government's Policy Statement or '*Motinnano*' on behalf of Cabinet and the current ruling party, Tobwaan Kiribati.

This *Motinnano* which I table before you today involves a great deal of work and effort and will be the foundation by which we as a government will work towards the positive development of our nation and our people. Our motto is to Serve and to Deliver and though there are many challenges that we will need to overcome, we will endeavor to do all that we can and we will do so underpinned with the values of good governance, transparency and accountability. I share with you all today this Government's *Motinnano* with the confidence that we will all join efforts to achieve what is best for our people.

A GOVERNMENT UNDERPINNED BY GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We should all be proud of the fact that Kiribati is a nation founded on our cultural values that promote respect, tolerance and integrity.

It is against this background that we as a Government commit to provide to Parliament on a timely basis the necessary reports and updates that will give you our people the assurance of not only our commitment to work towards our stated objectives, but also to provide the assurance that as a Government our performance is grounded on the values of good governance and integrity. Parliament will, on your behalf, scrutinize and guide us as we progress towards our targets.

Furthermore, one integral part of our *Motinnano* is to ensure that we advocate the Kiribati Constitution and where necessary amend those Acts or Regulations that conflict with the principals of good governance, transparency and accountability. As part of strengthening enforcement and compliance of these Acts, our Government has plans to improve ex-gratia benefits to our Local Magistrates in recognition of their key role in ensuring quality legal services to our people.

I am also very pleased to announce that as a Government we have already commenced a review on various Leadership Code models that would promote best practices particularly for us Leaders and it is our objective that this will be tabled at the next Parliament meeting. There are also plans to set up a Parliamentary Select Committee that will focus on investigating and preventing corruption and abuse of power by those who have held and who are currently holding positions of power. As elected Leaders we have a duty of care to preserve the integrity of the confidence and trust that our people have bestowed upon us.

In acknowledging the important role the civil service plays in ensuring Government's operational effectiveness and efficiency, allow me at this juncture to convey words of encouragement to all our public service

employees, for you have a very important role not only in the delivery of services but in the overall development of our nation. Let us perform to the best of our ability and let us aim for the sky in relation to the level and standard of our performance. For there is no limit to how much we can improve and as public servants, we should be above reproach and we should set the benchmark for best practices.

SUPPORTING AND FACILITATING INCREASED SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

The wealth and welfare of our people is at the core of our *Motinnano* and our Government is committed to reducing poverty and income inequalities through increased sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Economic growth alone should not be the main indicator of improved wealth and welfare of our people, but equally important is strengthening our social and environment indicators.

FACILITATING AND SUPPORTING GDP GROWTH

Sustainable and inclusive economic growth would equip our people to overcome the challenges arising from increasing cost of living, social and unemployment issues associated with a young and growing population.

As part of supporting and facilitating sustainable income generating opportunities that will be beneficial to the people and overall long term growth of our economy, our Government commits to strengthening local and international trade. With the highly dispersed nature of our islands, our Government will review avenues to improve freight and handling charges to enable the movement of local produce from source to market whilst at the same time support our people's endeavours to develop their local production. Our Government will also explore setting up tax free economic zones where

appropriate including expanding ports of entry to enable the business community to thrive.

We will continue to work with our Development partners to improve and increase the delivery of external assistance so that it is directed to where its impact is felt the most by our people. Not only that but it is important that all resources at our disposal are utilized with minimum wastage and in accordance with the relevant financial regulations.

Expanding our revenue base is key and one potential source of revenue that has not been fully exploited is returns from the use of our airspace which this Government is committed to pursuing. Maximizing the returns from the RERF is also one avenue that this Government will review with particular emphasis on the possibility of investing part of the RERF in development projects onshore targeted towards facilitating economic growth.

HARNESSING SUSTAINABLE RETURNS FROM OUR MARINE RESOURCES

Increasing our revenue sources through the development of our natural resources is also very key to providing the level of resource necessary to allow Government to achieve its objectives and to address the needs of its people.

As we all know Kiribati is custodian of one of the largest marine resource with fisheries currently a major revenue source underpinning Government's operations through access fees. However, our Government recognizes the need to increase returns from fisheries beyond just access fees and is committed to working with our partners towards development initiatives aimed at onshore processing and value added projects. Our target is for our fish product to be top quality as well as be of high demand.

Most importantly our objective in developing the fisheries sector is to support our local fishermen to be able to increase their income through preserving and maintaining the quality of their catch as well as market it and over the longer term process and value add for increased direct returns. Our Government is working intensively with our international partners to progress this initiative forward. Not only that, but facilitating the use of our ports by our fishing partners for discharging purposes would encourage greater development with benefits to the local economy.

However, fisheries is not only the potential source of revenue and our Government is committed to exploring deep sea mining with a view to not only expand our revenue base but also as a means of easing the pressure on over-harvesting of our fisheries sector.

As a major source of revenue and potential opportunities our Government is committed not only to its sustainable development, but also the preservation of our marine resources for the benefit of our people and more importantly for our future generations. As such, our Government intends to review and strengthen its regulations that relate to the protection of all marine resources, including sharks, to avoid over exploitation and abuse. Strengthening and improving the monitoring and policing of our ocean through increased cooperation with our neighbouring countries is also key.

SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Our natural land resources may be limited, but developing our agricultural sector is key to ensuring food security and encouraging healthier diets through the consumption of our local agricultural produce.

Our Government understands that in order for our local farmers to harvest and reap returns from their agricultural products, they should be well resourced with adequate tools and be given the opportunity to market their products. We will continue to work with our development partners to provide assistance to local farmers as well as to explore other areas such as livestock farming and to go further towards processing of local produce where it is most viable and with minimum opportunity costs.

We can all agree that arable land is limited necessitating an intergrated approach focusing on our local vegetation with the highest chance of maximum yield such as coconut trees to name just a few. This will also require maximizing the output from Government owned land including the land in Fiji to assist with food security as well as encouraging trade between our two nations including Rabi and Banaba.

DEVELOPING OUR HUMAN RESOURCE

Our people are our one main resource with the opportunity to be developed and most importantly to be the foundation by which our nation can develop economically and socially.

SUPPORT TO EDUCATION

As a Government we consider education to be key not only to the positive development of our young people, but also to allow them further opportunities within and beyond our shores. This necessitates that accessibility and the delivery of quality education should be strengthened and improved.

This Government is committed to implementing the Education Act 2013 that focuses on improving the quality of the learning environment for primary school

age children. The training and resourcing of teachers to allow them to deliver good quality education to our children will be one of our key objectives. A recurring issue is the maintenance of classrooms and residences for our teachers. We acknowledge the contribution from our development partner for the upgrading of our classroom facilities across the nation and look forward to this continuing assistance. As part and parcel of supporting an enabling environment for the delivery of a quality learning environment to our children, this Government has plans to upgrade teachers' residences as a means of not only supporting their well-being but also as a means to control public expenditure on maintenance.

Once our Government has delivered on improving the quality of the learning environment for primary school age children, this Government will review the possibility of expanding its support towards early childhood education as part of improving child education from an early age through such options that include training and adequate wages to pre-school teachers. This is an issue that is long overdue which to date has not been properly addressed.

However, even if the quality of the learning environment for our children has improved, if education is not easily accessible a significant portion of our population will remain marginalized. As a Government we have noted with concern the increasing inequality and inaccessibility of education particularly at the Senior Secondary School levels to a significant portion of our population. Such issues are an indication that the associated costs for a family to educate their children to the level that will increase their chances of being successful in life is increasing with the very real potential to widen inequities at the household and community levels. Today, I have the great pleasure to announce that the

provision of free education up to Form 4 and Form 6 will take effect following the endorsement of the 2016 Government Budget.

IMPROVED HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

We can all agree that, in order to develop the natural wealth that is our people, it is also essential that we support their health and well-fare. As a small developing nation, our challenges are multiplied if our limited resources are channeled towards increased curative needs. Of particular concern is the health indicators for our infants and women not to mention the increasing trend in non-communicable diseases. Improvement in our health indicators benchmarked against regional and international standards is a sure sign that not only is the populace improving in health but equally likely in prosperity. As such it is important that the adequate level of resources are channeled towards preventive as well as curative medical services.

In support of a healthy population, our Government has already initiated a review on how we can better improve our current medical services that includes but is not limited to the provision of the essential medical equipments and resourcing key medical staff with the objective that our current medical services are properly targeted to the main health needs of our people. Not only that ensuring the well-fare of patients is important and I am pleased to announce that the provision of a meal allowance to the patients in Betio hospital will be implemented in the upcoming days.

DEVELOPING THE CAPABILITIES AND TALENTS OF OUR YOUNG GENERATION

You will all agree with me that our young people are our most important resource and they will be the ones who will continue with our nation building process.

Given that you our young generation make up the bulk of our population it is therefore only right and proper that as a Government we ensure that you are adequately resourced to take up your role as future leaders and contributing citizens of your community and nation.

Training opportunities in vocational areas will be increased through the establishment of further training facilities where appropriate on Tarawa, Betio and Kiritimati. Support to sport as a potential avenue for the development of the talents of our young generation will be improved including the revival of the National Sports Tournament and increased participation in regional and international sporting events.

INCREASING PROSPERITY FOR OUR PEOPLE AT THE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY LEVEL

Increased prosperity at the household and community level is one effective way of reducing poverty and hardship.

It is any Government's duty to provide an enabling environment for its people to rise above the challenges of poverty and hardship and our Government considers that direct support at the household level is key. One possibility that our Government is exploring is direct support to infants from birth up to the age of 5 years, an initiative that has never been done before. A detailed study is being commissioned so that when this support is implemented, it is done properly and targeted to where it is needed the most.

Direct financial assistance to the elderly will continue, though our Government will improve further on its implementation with particular focus on the rights of our elders. Assistance to those with special needs is also under consideration.

Support to our people in the rural area is important and it is with great pleasure that I formally announce that one of our Motinnano relating to improving existing income generating opportunities for our people through the increase of the price of copra to \$2 has been included in this year's recurrent budget with a view that this increase takes effect within the week following the conclusion of this Parliament's session. Whilst the overall objective is increased prosperity to our people particularly in the rural areas, the positive spin-off effects would be possible reduction of urban migration if our rural population are assured of increased wealth at the household level wherever they may be.

Furthermore Government is committed to strengthening the working conditions of our civil service employees through adequate remuneration and improved terms of employment. This will be expanded further to those employees who are currently not covered under the terms and conditions of permanent civil service employees including minimum wage and contractual employment conditions. Not only that but this Government is committed to ensuring that our civil servants on South Tarawa, Betio and Kiritimati will be adequately housed and I take this opportunity to encourage the Kiribati Housing Corporation in cooperation with our Development Partners to continue with the current housing projects and explore other initiatives to address this issue.

As part of ensuring that employment of our nationals abroad is maintained and increased, our Government is committed to addressing the hurdles that continue to disadvantage our people in comparison with others from the region and will continue to work with our relevant Development Partners to address these issues.

In addition, the development and protection of the women of Kiribati remains a key priority for our Government as we all know that the women are the

backbone of any family unit and their development through increased support of their individual talents in local handicrafts and produce to name a few would reap direct benefits at the household level.

Understanding that traditional landowners in urban as well as rural areas are being marginalized through lost opportunities from developing their own land, Government is committed to creating income generating opportunities for them as well as improving compensation for the use of their land.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHURCH LEADERS AND NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS FOR THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PEOPLE

Our Churches and Non-Government Agencies have a very important role as they are in touch with our people through their various missions targeted towards strengthening our people's social and spiritual environment. Our Motinnano underscores the need to continue and strengthen support to your work with our people so that development of our nation is founded on solid cultural and spiritual values.

In saying so, I am pleased to announce that this Government has decided to increase assistance to our Churches from \$500,000 to \$1 million with the objective that it alleviates financial pressure on our people and facilitating the ability of our Churches to fulfill their objectives of supporting our people spiritually and socially.

Our Government will also look into reviving a centralized NGO agency that will assist in coordinating all NGO's for more effective social support to our population as well as channel assistance locally and externally towards community grass-root activities.

DEVELOPING THE LINE AND PHOENIX AREA

Our Government considers the Line and Phoenix area as a potential economic hub for Kiribati through the development of but not limited to Tourism particular to the context of Kiribati and our marine resources through possible added value ventures. In exploring economic opportunities, it is important that the people's needs in these areas are addressed as an initial start to the development process.

This will include developing the basic infrastructure such as communication and transportation links to enable economic growth. Equally important governance issues need to be strengthened so that Government operation in the Line and Phoenix is as effective and efficient as possible and our Government considers that this is possible through decentralizing Government led activities in this area to the Ministry of Line & Phoenix Island Development. Improving the terms and condition of public employees based in Kiritimati will also be key as well as a review of Government owned land in the Line and Phoenix area with a view to issue business and residential leases where appropriate as part of developing the Line and Phoenix Area.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Change continues to be a global issue that Kiribati is not immune from. However, in order to adequately address this challenge, as a Government we are working on formulating a Climate Change policy which has never been formalized before. This policy will guide how we work towards overcoming the challenges of Climate Change through increased public awareness and education of our communities with the continued support of our Development Partners. Protection of our communities most vulnerable from the impact of sea

level rise and the increased intensity and frequency of weather patterns is critical. Information and knowledge by the communities on how best to protect their environment is one way of improving the resilience of our people.

The prohibitive mitigation and adaptive costs to allow for our people to survive the impacts of Climate Change is a real concern for this Government and we are greatly appreciative of the continued assistance from our development partners which we hope will increase in level and accessibility and be targeted to where it matters the most.

SUPPORT TO OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS A MEANS OF DECENTRALIZING SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE

One of our Motinnano clearly states that in order to assist in the economic development of our outer islands, it is important that we work together with the Island Councils to improve their operational effectiveness and efficiency.

As I mentioned during the recently concluded Mayoral Forum, you our Island Councils have a very important role to play as you are in contact with our people on a daily basis and you are the eyes and ears of the national Government with the ability to inform Government how best to maximize benefits from the limited resources at our disposal to where it is needed the most and where its positive impact to the people is felt the most.

In this context, our Government will continue to provide financial support to our Councils and will explore improving the governance structure of the Councils that will include resourcing the mayors and councils as a means to increase their operational effectiveness and efficiency. Once Councils become more

effective and efficient, economic development at the island level should improve as well as the ability of central Government to decentralize its services by delegating it to the local government.

SUPPORT TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS THE ENGINE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

I wish also to acknowledge the Private Sector or Business Community, whom we can all agree are the engine of economic growth. A thriving private sector has the real potential to address the needs of our people lessening pressure on the Government. However, as with the public sector, this comes with responsibilities to serve the people well and to serve the people fairly.

As a Government we will ensure that the relevant Acts and Regulations to support and facilitate the growth of the private sector will be improved for greater enforcement and compliance and most importantly to enable competition and market forces to develop.

Furthermore as part of facilitating the growth of the private sector, our Government is committed to strengthening the services of the Development Bank of Kiribati as a tool for business entrepreneurs to start and maintain their businesses. I take this opportunity to encourage our private sector to continue to work together, for as sectors that are there for the purpose of serving the people, we will reap mutual benefits through the positive development of our people.

ENABLING ECONOMIC GROWTH

To facilitate and achieve economic growth, it is important that the basic foundations to achieving such objectives are in place and operational. It is in this context that we acknowledge the importance of strengthening and

improving our basic infrastructure. If we are to develop the outer islands, it is important that the required infrastructure is also developed concurrently so that the opportunities from strengthened and improved outer island development is maximized.

Our Motinnano clearly advocates improving our transportation sector and I am pleased to announce that a review is already in the process of assessing how to best improve and strengthen this area not only nationally but equally important in respect of international connections.

With the highly dispersed nature of our islands, development of our marine transportation is key to inter island connections. This will include improving our ports so that there is greater efficiency in the shipping sector. To ensure that our marine vessels continue to be sea worthy, it is important that the national shipyard is revived and developed for easier access to regular repair and maintenance services.

Furthermore, this Government will continue to work towards strengthening and improving the telecommunications sector. We can no longer work in isolation of the rest of the world and whatever opportunities that may lie outside of our national boundaries, they can only be accessed through improved communication linkages. Equally important as a nation that is highly dispersed in terms of land mass, linkages with our families on the outer island should be strengthened.

ENHANCING OUR FOREIGN POLICY

At this point in time I wish to convey my appreciation on behalf of the Government and the people of Kiribati to our partners who have been with us throughout our development journey. I want to emphasize that our joint efforts,

that of Government and our partners has contributed to where we are today and I have every confidence that this partnership founded on mutual trust and mutual benefits will continue throughout our lifetimes.

The support from our external partners rendered through initiatives that cover a multitude of sectors ranging from health to infrastructure just to name a few has been greatly appreciated. As a nation, we have seen and most importantly experienced the outcome of the support that you have offered and again I take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and the people of Kiribati to convey our gratitude to you and through you your Organizations, Governments and people for their generous support towards our development aspirations. Our Motinnano commits to continue and strengthen our Bilateral and Multilateral relations which have realized benefits on various fronts to our people. Let us continue to work together and let us continue to join efforts towards greater positive outcomes.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Before I conclude, I would like to emphasize again that as elected leaders it is important that we serve our people to the best of our ability and that our performance and actions are underscored by the objective to improve the lives of our people. Though there is a lot of work to be done requiring a significant level of resourcing not to mention time constraints, it remains our responsibility to ensure that what we have pledged is delivered.

I take this opportunity to convey again my gratitude on behalf of Cabinet and Tobwaan Kiribati party for the confidence in us to lead this nation forward. I extend my appreciation to my fellow Members of Parliament for their willingness

to work together to ensure that as a Government we achieve the best outcomes for our people within the resources at our disposal.

My encouragement to our public service and our partners who will continue to support our endeavors to achieve our objectives as efficiently and as effectively as possible. Last but not least my appreciation to the Speaker who will be our guiding voice as we deliberate over what is best for the people of Kiribati. To you our people, we will remain with you through the challenges and opportunities that are part of development.

I share with you all our Kiribati traditional blessing of Te Mauri, Te Raoi ao Te Tabomoa.

Kam Bati N Rabwa.