

**Hon. Tetabo Nakara**  
**Minister of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development**

Your Excellencies, fellow Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good Evening.

It gives me great pleasure to update you on progress in the Phoenix Islands Protected Area, affectionately known as “the PIPA”, which is one of the first GLISPA commitments announced at the first GLISPA High Level Event at the CBD COP-8 in Brazil, just over two years ago. PIPA is aligned with and is one of the priorities of the Kiribati NBSAP.

Ladies and Gentleman, two years ago was a turning point for Kiribati; we declared the PIPA as the world’s third largest MPA, based on outcomes of three scientific expeditions, numerous discussions and meetings with all interested parties within Kiribati and development of a partnership with the New England Aquarium and Conservation International.

Our information revealed that the coral reefs and bird populations of these islands are unique, virtually untouched by man –a true wilderness of natural beauty. In protecting the pristine nature of the islands, Kiribati decided that it would not only fulfill its commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity and as a first commitment to GLSPA, but the protection would also:

- help deter illegal fishing activities;
- serve as an insurance against loss or decline of marine & terrestrial species in the Gilberts & Line group of islands;
- ensure conservation of some important economic species that have declined elsewhere in Kiribati especially in densely populated areas;
- make a MPA contribution to the urgently needed measures for conservation of tuna and seamounts;
- foster the development of ecotourism and importantly for our developing nation;
- ensure that Kiribati will be compensated for the loss of fishing revenue when closing off these islands.

Ladies and Gentleman – two years goes fast! We have made substantial and I believe, with pride, quite spectacular progress. In particular we have:

- completed a review of all information – more than 600 reports – on the Phoenix Islands, analyzed, digitized and archived this as a resource to inform our management;
- completed an initial resource economic valuation;
- prepared a draft management and operational plans and implemented urgent interim management arrangements;
- committed to listing PIPA as a World Heritage Site – I would welcome any interested parties to comment on the draft nomination;
- agreed an endowment target, trust fund design and capitalization strategy for PIPA;
- welcomed new partners for PIPA including the Governments of Australia, New Zealand and UNESCO and we hope soon the GEF as PIPA is recognized in the new Pacific Alliance for Sustainability;
- AND based on growing confidence with these partnerships and effort Kiribati has gazetted the final outer boundary of the PIPA and associated regulations finalized by our Cabinet in January this year, declaring it the world’s largest MPA at more than 410,000 sq km.

Kiribati and partners recognize we have come a long way and we have a long way to go to make PIPA a fully functioning reality – but I hope you agree that we have moved fast to implementation action.

To highlight this I would especially like to acknowledge the Kiribati/New Zealand team that is in the Phoenix RIGHT NOW eradicating invasive species that threaten globally important seabird populations. With funding assistance of the Government of New Zealand Government we have taken the first step in atoll restoration for the PIPA and we hope this will increase interest to help us fully restore these atolls.

PIPA is our first substantial commitment to the CBD and GLISPA – we do not intend it to be the last. One of the benefits of the PIPA investments and partnerships has been to build capacity to also address conservation issues more widely in Kiribati.

I would like to close my update tonight by highlighting that we welcome new partners and help with PIPA and also for the Line Islands. For example in Kirimati Island, latest surveys indicate we could lose globally important populations of many seabird species including in some cases the world's largest breeding populations like Te bwebwe ni marawa (white-throated storm-petrel – experts tell us we have only a few years at hand to turn this around – we need your help.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for the GLSPA partnership and network – it is working. Kiribati is committed and we have globally important contributions to conservation that we can make – but not alone – please join us.

KAM BATI N RABA and I thank you all for your attention.