



77th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY TE BERETITENTI TANETI MAAMAU
***“High-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the international
day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons”***
27 September 2022

Mr. President,
Fellow Leaders, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

I am honored to join the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and further wish to reaffirm my country's commitment towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

For over 60 years our people have terribly suffered from the trauma of nuclear testing on Kiritimati island and nothing has been done. We have waited for 60 years and how much longer should we wait for? I watched and heard that the world bank was very swift in responding to Ukraine's request by providing billions of dollars as cash grant or a form of debt. But what about our needs to address those who have suffered from nuclear weapons and testing?

We have to ask why these crises continue to happen when the UN is supposed to be more effective? Do those sitting on the permanent security council have the power and means to address this?

Kiribati will continue to say No to nuclear weapons or nuclear-powered entities in line with natural justice and conscience, and respect the objectives and spirit of the Rarotonga Treaty. If we are part of the problem, then we should also be part of the solution.

As it seems to be the case, the problems, and solutions for small island sovereign states like Kiribati are determined by powerful countries and these are not transparent and fair. Our Pacific cultures including Kiribati have their own institutions of solving conflicts and violence through dialogue or te “Maroro”. We find such more effective, transparent and inclusive.

Kiribati is also gravely concerned by the buildup and future use of nuclear-powered war machineries in our region. The ever-present risk of nuclear contamination it poses and particular its impact on our lives and livelihoods.

Mr. President,

Kiribati devotes particular attention to the humanitarian goals of the Treaty embodied in Articles VI and VII as positive obligations to address the harm from the past use and testing of nuclear weapons including the prevention of future harm. We urge states parties to emphasize the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons as a critical issue. In doing so, we must also underline the importance of calling all states to join our efforts to address the rights and needs of affected communities through victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation and assistance.

To address the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons testing and use, we strongly believe that the establishment of an international trust fund for states parties affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons would be essential in implementing Articles VI and VII of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Thank you