Committee: General Assembly
Delegation: The Republic of Kiribati
Topic: Addressing Climate Change and Ensuring Protecting For Persons Displaced Due To Adverse Effects Of Climate Change

The Republic of Kiribati recognises with great urgency the alarming effects of climate change, particularly forced displacement. The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) recently predicted an 80 percent chance that in the next 5 years annual global temperatures will exceed 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.[1] Such high temperatures have an undeniably negative impact on the Earth and its inhabitants, with many being highly vulnerable to their consequences. In fact, 359 million weather-related global displacements have been recorded since 2008.[2] While Kiribati, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), is responsible for only 0.6% of world greenhouse gas emissions, it is extremely affected by climate change.[3]

Kiribati is one of the smallest, least developed countries, consisting of 32 low-lying atoll islands and one raised limestone island. Despite its dispersed area, some regions, particularly our capital, Tarawa, are densely populated, magnifying the damage caused by climate change-induced events. Kiribati also forms part of the Asia Pacific region, from which nearly half of global climate-related displacements have originated.[2] Due to our economy's reliance on fishing and tourism, it is also vulnerable to drastic changes in sea levels and temperature. As extreme global warming accelerates sea-level rise, flooding has become a major threat, salinating our potable water, jeopardizing the integrity of our atolls, and driving our people from their homes.

In response, Kiribati has established various nationwide policies such as the Kiribati Adaptation Programme (KAP I-III)[4], a multi-year programme which aims to protect Kiribati against sea-level rise. By effectively utilising funds for coastal protection and improvements in community awareness, this project has become exemplary for small island adaptation. Our government has also developed the Migration with Dignity policy [5], ensuring life necessities, cultural preservation, and impartial opportunities for those considering planned relocation. By establishing bilateral labour agreements, Kiribati has become the first to recognise legal migration as a climate change adaptation. However, despite the World Bank's role in promoting migration pathways to various nearby countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, we believe that this should be a last resort.

Kiribati's goals to combat climate change and its effects remain clear, as highlighted by His Excellency Taneti Maamau, "Our efforts, aligned with international climate goals, focus on building resilience, protecting livelihoods, and preserving our culture." [6]

Besides our national actions, the Republic of Kiribati is a proud signatory of the Paris

[1] World Meteorological Organization. (2024, June 5). Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update 2024–2028. https://library.wmo.int/viewer/68910/download?file=WMO_GADCU_2024-2028_en.pdf&type=pdf&navigator=1
[2] Siddiqui, U., Ali, M., & Duggal, H. (2024, November 22). Mapping the impact of climate change on global displacement. Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/11/22/mapping-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-global-displacement
[3] Iberdrola. (n.d.). Kiribati and climate change. https://www.iberdrola.com/sustainability/kiribati-climate-change
[4] World Bank. (2018). Kiribati Adaptation Program (KAP) Phase III Project Appraisal Document.
[5] Government of Kiribati. (2012). Migration with Dignity Policy. Ministry of Labour and Human Resources Development
[6] United Nations General Assembly. (2025). Statement by H.E. Taneti Maamau, President of the Republic of Kiribati, General Debate of the 80th Session of the UNGA. United Nations.

Agreement (2015)[7], the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)[8], the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)[9], and the Sendai Framework[10], giving SIDS a voice in global climate negotiations. Under the Paris Agreement, Kiribati has set forth multiple frameworks, particularly the Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan (KJIP)[11], to promote sustainable actions through which the goal to restrict rising global temperatures to reasonable levels through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) will be met. Moreover, the UNFCCC has allowed Kiribati to advocate for international co-operation, while holding countries accountable for their effects on the planet. The other agreements aim to reduce the cause for displacements by ensuring marine protection and minimising climate change-induced disasters. While these preventive agreements attack the cause for the migrants, none outline how to protect them.

Due to this ambiguity, the protection of people displaced by climate change and their rights remains insufficient. To address this, the Republic of Kiribati advocates for a UN-led Protocol for Climate Displacement and Mobility to establish clear definitions and benefits for climate refugees. This Protocol, alongside the recognition of climate displacement as a form of Loss and Damage under the Paris Agreement, would ensure legal protection and options for those displaced by climate change. In accordance with Kiribati's standpoint, exploring the preservation of cultural identity, sovereignty, and dignity for displaced people will also be crucial for this Protocol.

Moreover, we propose the creation of an International Displacement and Climate Accountability Organisation (IDCAO), an organisation that would publish biannual reports combining WMO data, International Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) projections, and real numbers of climate migrants. Additionally, it would ensure transparency by tracking each nation’s adaptation aid, emission cuts, and migration assistance, in order to encourage more ambitious plans to combat climate change-induced displacement.

The Republic of Kiribati also believes that major emitters should be held accountable for their part in global damage. Therefore, we also present a Climate Displacement Responsibility Index (CDRI) to measure countries’ financial obligations towards a Global Climate Displacement Fund, which would help vulnerable countries invest in climate-resistant infrastructure and education to enhance local capacity. The CDRI would link a state’s funding with its CO2 emissions, its GDP, and its capacity to pay.

In conclusion, Kiribati continues to push for transparency, resilience, and dedication to solving the issue of climate displacement. We are committed to working alongside fellow SIDS and other vulnerable states to ensure cultural and legal protection for climate refugees. Similarly, we urge more developed countries to increase ambition towards mitigation goals and provide efficient, fair, and inclusive migration pathways. We must remember that the world's choices today will define the future of vulnerable nations and their peoples.

[7] Paris Agreement, Dec. 12, 2015, T.I.A.S. No. 16-1104.

[8] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, May 9, 1992, 1771 U.N.T.S. 107.

[9] United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Dec. 10, 1982, 1833 U.N.T.S. 397.t.

[10] Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, U.N. Doc. A/RES/69/283 (June 3, 2015).

[11] Government of Kiribati. (2019). Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (KJIP). Office of the President.