Kiribati Health Minister’s Speech for the 73rd WHA 2020

Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Director-General of WHO, Honourable Ministers from the Member States around the world, and distinguished guests,

Kam na mauri,

• Thanking our Lord Almighty for keeping us all safe wherever we are

• Kiribati is a small island nation in the Pacific and is one of the few countries in the world where there is no COVID-19 and we aim to keep it this way.

• The Government of Kiribati has taken early action to minimize any potential importation of the new coronavirus into our country and His Excellency President Taneti Maamau declared State of Public Emergency on 26 March 2020 to prepare our health systems and to manage the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic which is affecting people’s livelihood in Kiribati as well.

• Government of Kiribati has developed COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Regulations 2020, the National COVID-19 plan, and SOPs for various sectors.

• Our borders are closed at airports and seaports. However, the Government of Kiribati is chartering flights to ensure critical medical as well as other urgent supplies are available while safety measures are implemented at seaports to allow ongoing cargoes to come in.

• At seaports and airports, strict SOPs are in place to ensure covid19 is not imported into our borders

• We thank the WHO for providing technical guidance, training of our healthcare workers, valuable PPEs, diagnostic kits, and helping us reach our community with up-to-date information.

• We also thank other Development Partners for providing financial as well as other technical support to assist the Government in its preparedness program
• However, as a small island nation in the Pacific facing global shortages and disruption of supply chain of essential medical supplies, it is a challenge for the Government of Kiribati but it is trying its best to ensure adequate supplies are available for our people.

• I urge Members States and partners, irrespective of political differences to come together to collaborate and support each other and the small island nations to build resilient health systems for readiness and response.

• I believe with strong solidarity, we can defeat the virus, save lives and mitigate the socioeconomical impacts.

• Our thoughts and prayers are with everyone in suffering and hardship. We hope to win this battle together with God’s blessings

Kam rabwa