



## Republic of Kiribati

### Government Policy on Adaptation to Climate Change

Warming of the earth's climate, with an associated rise in sea level and an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather conditions, is currently occurring and is likely to continue through this century. The principal cause of these changes is the effect on the earth's atmosphere of emissions from economic activities in industrialised countries. International recognition of this has led wealthy nations to set up arrangements to help developing countries with the design and financing of national programmes of adaptation to climate change.

Kiribati is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which constitute a major strategic risk to the economy and national well-being. The nature of the risk has to be specified and appropriate responses developed at national and local levels. Successive Governments of Kiribati have been active in global and regional consultations about the climatic changes taking place and how to deal with them. National expertise has developed and links have been established with the relevant regional and international institutions.

As Kiribati cannot escape climate change it must adapt to it. The adaptation process needs to give people the best possible chance of living decent lives during and beyond the period of climate change now foreseen. As the impacts of climate change reach into all aspects of life in Kiribati, broad public consultation and participation in planning and implementation are needed for sustainable responses. Many departments of government are involved, requiring both central policy co-ordination and clear delegation of responsibility for action. And as the precise speed and extent of future climate change is unknowable, adaptive responses themselves need to be risk-minimising, flexible and progressive.

The current statement of National Development Strategies (NDS) 2004-7 identifies climate change as a major area of developmental concern. In Key Policy Area 1, *Economic Growth*, Issue 3 states '*Climate change brings potentially costly risks to economic growth*', and calls for the development of '*participatory and cost-effective ways of minimising and managing risk of loss from climate change-related events*'.

The Government's policy aims in respect of climate change are therefore that

- (a) Kiribati should be mentally, physically and financially well prepared to deal with whatever climatic trends and events the future may hold;
- (b) This should be achieved through a co-ordinated, participation-based adaptation programme carried out by official and private agencies; and
- (c) external financial assistance should be obtained to meet the costs of the national adaptation programme.

Broad-based consultations at island and national level took place in 2003. Detailed work to prepare the national adaptation programme is in hand with assistance from UNDP, the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility. The implementation strategy governing the national climate change adaptation (CCA) programme is described in a separate statement.