

21st SESSION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

A submission by
the Assemblies of God Church of Kiribati (AG)



A. Introduction

- i. The Assemblies of God (AG) is a religion with more than 1000 followers in Kiribati. The headquarters of AG is located at Tebikenikoora, South Tarawa where more than 200 followers reside. Along with the residences or houses and the church, AG has a preschool, a ministerial and a vocational school located at Tebikenikoora as well.
- ii. This is the first time for AG to present its UPR report which based on the follow-up from the State Report submitted in 2010. The issues raised in this report are based on Recommendations 75, 78, 79, 81 and 82.

B. Key issues.

1. Right to religion.

- i. AG commends the Government for the recognition of the freedom of religion under the Constitution and for a strong relations and partnership with the churches and faith-based organisations (FBOs) in most developmental plans however AG observed that the recognition and involvement of major churches is greater than minor churches.

Recommendation:

AG recommends the Government to continue its relations and partnerships with FBOs. AG also recommends the Government to recognize, involve and provide support to all churches equally.

2. Climate change.

- i. AG acknowledges that the Government accepted recommendations 81 and 82 *to study the possibility of developing a national environment charter or a similar instrument to define the roles and responsibilities as well as the coordination of action by all relevant parties including civil society and to actively pursue international cooperation aimed at adapting to the adverse of climate change.*
- ii. AG commends the Government for its continuous effort in advocating for climate change both national and international particularly in hosting the Tarawa Climate Change Conference in November 2010, setting up and supporting the Kiribati Adaptation Plan Projects phases I, II and II and the welcoming of the visit of the UN Secretary General in 2012. These are milestones in the government's progress to address climate change and they show commitments related to the implementation of Recommendations 81 and 82.
- iii. AG is concerned that Tebikenikoora is greatly affected from climate change and sea level rise. AG and particularly the livelihood of people, is at stake because the location is flooded with seawater causing damages to the church, schools, homes, plants, water and seawall and destroy food crops. The Government is aware of the problem and have send technical people and experts to assess the damages with a promise to provide assistance or to find a way to at least mitigate the damages. AG acknowledges these surveys and is still looking forward to the government to fulfill its promise and provide assistance that is necessary.

Recommendation:

As follow-up to the recommendations, AG now recommends that the Government acts on its promise to provide assistance or mitigation to the damages caused from climate change and sea-

level rise and to consider making a constructive plan in consultation with AG and any other relevant organization, on ways to address the problem, to mitigate it or any other plans that will be actually implemented instead of the many studies and surveys conducted on Tebikenikoora.

3. Education.

- i. AG acknowledges that the Government accepted Recommendations 75,77, 78 and 79 to *strengthen further its educational system to guarantee unrestricted access to education for every member of the population, earmark a larger budget for the educational sector and revise existing educational legislation in order to ensure access to primary education for children of all regions, upgrade the efficiency and skills of teachers and to consider developing a human rights education and training programs in the context of upgrading its national education system.*
- ii. The Government deserves applause for enacting the Education Act (2013), setting up and supporting the Kiribati Education Improvement Program to improve access to education by all children by 2020, enacting the Compulsory Education Order 2006 to increase the age of compulsory education from primary school level to junior secondary school level and developing the Inclusive Education Policy to improve the education system – age, access, building and the quality of curriculums and teachers. AG looks forward to the full implementation of the Act, policies and developments on this area.
- iii. The Government's supports on the promotion of vocational trainings and the development of the Kiribati Institute of Technology (KIT) and its variety of courses on carpentry, mechanics, plumbing as well as academic courses, is commendable. However AG is concerned that beside KIT, there are no established vocational schools to accommodate the large number of unqualified and unemployed youths in Kiribati.
- iv. The Government provides scholarship opportunities not only to the Government Sector but also the Private Sectors and it covers a lot of academic fields. However AG is concerned that there is a lack of support for theological studies to develop the capacity of religious on this field.

Recommendation:

As follow-up to the recommendations, AG recommends that the Government considers providing support and assistance to FBOs and NGOs to run quality vocational schools to complement the KIT. Also, the government must consider setting up academic and vocational schools or institutions to develop music, dancing, singing and sports as professions and include it in the education policies and plans. AG also recommends that the Government extends its scholarship support to AG's students to study at the South Pacific Bible College in Fiji, the only Bible College in the region where the church's student study.

