



BIOGRAPHY: BERETITENTI ANOTE TONG

His Excellency Anote Tong is former President (Beretitenti) of the Republic of Kiribati. He won the election in July 2003 and had been re-elected in 2007 and again in January 2012. He attended St. Bede's College for secondary education, graduated from Canterbury University with a degree in Science, and obtained a Master in Economics from the London School of Economics.

Tong is originally from the island of Maiana, located in central Kiribati. He is a strong climate change advocate and has stated on several occasions that Kiribati may cease to exist altogether, and that its entire population may need to be resettled not as climate change refugees but citizens who migrate on merit and with dignity. In June 2008, he stated that Kiribati may already have reached "the point of no return"; he added: "To plan for the day when you no longer have a country is indeed painful but I think we have to do that."

Under Tong's leadership, the Government of Kiribati declared 150,000 square miles (400,000 km²) of the Phoenix Islands marine area what is known today as the Phoenix Islands Protected Area, PIPA which a UNESCO World Heritage. From January 2015, PIPA became off limit to fishing and other extractive uses. PIPA's "rich biodiversity includes an abundance of healthy corals, big sharks, groupers, tuna, giant clams and other critters that have been depleted in much of the rest of the world". Tong regards PIPA as a gift to humanity and a significant contribution to the world community in the hope they would also act"

President Tong has won a number of awards and recognition that acknowledges his contribution and leadership on climate change and ocean conservation. Prior being named the 2012 Hillary Laureate Awardee, President Tong received the Peter Benchley Ocean Award from the Blue Frontier Campaign in June 2012 and was also awarded the Honorary Doctorate Degree in Engineering from the National Pukyong University in South Korea and most recently in August