



**Te Wa Forum
6-7 May 2026
Tarawa, Kiribati**

Chair's Summary

1. Te Wa Forum was held in South Tarawa, Kiribati from 6 to 7 May 2026 and was attended by High Commissioners of Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, Chief Executive Officer of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement and Senior officials of the Embassies of the Republic of South Korea and the United States of America. Also in attendance are representatives from the Albacora, Asian Development Bank, China Ocean Engineering, Survey and Design Company, Cowater International New Zealand, Dongwon, Golden Ocean Fish Limited, Korea Overseas Fishing Association, Sajo, Shanghai Fisheries Group, Silla, United Nation Resident Coordinator Office, Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, World Bank, Zhejiang Ocean Family Limited and Zhoushan Yinghai Fisheries Co. Limited. Local private sector communities were also represented, Central Pacific Producers Limited, Kiribati Seafood Company Limited, Kiribati Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Teatinimarawa Company Limited and Tottison Services.
2. The Forum was officially opened by Honourable Minister Ribanataake Tiwau of the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, who highlighted the theme “*paddle together as one toward our shared future.*” Hon. Tiwau stressed that Te Wa symbolizes unity, direction, and shared effort, much like a canoe traveling across the Blue Pacific Continent, where every person must paddle together with rhythm, trust, and resolve. Over the following two days, the Minister stated that discussions would focus on open and constructive dialogue, building mutual trust, and forging a shared path toward the sustainable development and management of Kiribati’s ocean resources, known as Ara Marawa. He concluded by warmly welcoming all distinguished guests and offering best wishes for productive dialogue and an enjoyable stay in Kiribati.
3. The Pacific Ocean Commissioner, Dr. Filimon Manoni, noted that global shifts are increasingly influencing regional conditions, highlighting the need for responsive, aligned priorities and stronger collaboration. Key challenges include climate change, shifting fish stocks, and ecosystem impacts, which pressure the resources underpinning Pacific economies and livelihoods. He stated that the forum theme reflects Pacific identity - connected by the ocean, guided by shared values, and strongest when moving forward together. Addressing these challenges requires strong coordination, clear priorities, and effective partnerships, aligning with the 2050 Strategy of the Blue Pacific Continent, to advance collective action and resilient ocean governance. Dr. Manoni offered three reflections: country leadership at the centre, strengthened partnerships through collaboration, and a focus on delivery. He reaffirmed the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner’s commitment to supporting Kiribati and the wider Pacific in ocean governance and policy coherence. He closed by thanking the Government of Kiribati for its leadership and all partners for their continued commitment to the Pacific.



4. During the session, two presentations were delivered. The first covered past and current achievements, priorities, and challenges, specifically addressing finance, human resource capacity, legal and governance frameworks, infrastructure, and operational inefficiencies. It emphasized that resolving these issues would strengthen capacity, improve performance, and create lasting value for both the people and the ocean. Following this presentation, the *MFOR Annual Report 2025*¹ was officially launched. The second presentation introduced the *Ara Marawa Ocean Policy*², outlining its vision, eight strategic priorities, and approaches to implementation and monitoring. Key focus areas included integrated governance frameworks, sustainable development of ocean resources, marine ecosystem protection, maritime safety and security, expanding ocean knowledge and capacity building, strengthening climate-ocean resilience, community engagement, and mobilizing ocean finance. The presentation also detailed next steps: fostering partnerships, securing sustainable financing, establishing proper working facilities, expanding micro-canning operations, and initiating a fisheries/seafood hub in Betio Port. Achieving these goals would make the fisheries sector resilient, reduce donor dependency, and enable Kiribati to adapt independently to climate change. The Ara Marawa Ocean Policy was officially launched alongside the presentation.
5. Partners highlighted challenges stemming from inadequate infrastructure, including the lack of fishing wharves and shipyards, which hampers efficient fish landing and timely vessel repairs. They also noted the need for a consistent supply of tuna raw materials to support existing processing plants and called on joint venture partners to assist. Other concerns included the implications of the BBNJ agreement on Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and the need for stronger national coordination. Partners also expressed interest in supporting MFOR's priorities, including the Ara Marawa Ocean Policy, combating IUU fishing, micro-canning facilities, a fit-for-purpose fishing port, and an aquaculture centre. Kiribati thanked partners for their interest to support these priorities. Regarding the Betio port master plan and its link to the seafood processing plant, the Betio Port Masterplan was funded by Australia and has been developed in close collaboration with MICT and the Government of Kiribati, with Cabinet endorsing one of several design options. MFOR provided input to the Betio port masterplan, and the plan is anticipated to be officially launched soon. The port will serve domestic ferries, container ships, Police Maritime Unit, bunkering, and fisheries. A committee comprising the Marine Division-MICT, MFED, and MFOR is working on detailed designs and budget estimates.
6. Regarding marine protected areas formerly known as Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), the previous closure designated to PIPA which equivalent to 11% of Kiribati's EEZ has been uplifted. MFOR now introduced a Marine Spatial Planning model to better align to conservation and sustainable development. On balancing sustainable development and conservation, Marine Spatial Planning allows multiple ocean uses, such as MPAs and sustainable fisheries; to coexist without compromising future resources. The restructuring of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) into a Marine Spatial Planning framework will serve as an opportunity to test this concept.

¹ <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IgcrczHS0t-KV7ENj1NqyB5RX4jsai9T8?usp=sharing>

² <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14a-facGPwr-gilW55gKGxQd8LYIeh36?usp=sharing>

7. On large scale aquaculture, Kiribati confirmed it is a priority and currently in the experimental stage, aimed at sustaining fisheries resources, supporting food security, and cultivating valuable fish species for foreign marketing. Regarding micro-canning, it remains in the experimental phase and is proposed for small-scale operation in outer islands to promote sustainability, market access, value addition, waste reduction, and reduced reliance (inflation) on imported canned tuna. Once operational, it may scale up to medium size and align with the fisheries hub planned at Betio Port, to enhance trade and domestic market benefits.
8. Partners reaffirmed their strong commitment to supporting Kiribati's fisheries and ocean resources development through technical advisory assistance, tuna supply chain improvements, policy investment initiatives, and targeted capacity building. Key areas include ship-rider training, fishing reporting, BBNJ-related support, monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) to combat IUU fishing, maritime security, vessel repair, scholarships on Marine Genetic Resources (MGR), and technical support for deep sea mining and hydrocarbon exploration. Additional support includes GEF technical assistance for coastal adaptation and integrated ocean governance, a TA budget allocation of \$1.8 million, monitoring and evaluation for the Ara Marawa Policy, an ocean sustainable financing strategy, and a framework for the Ara Marawa Fund. Other partners expressed willingness to support infrastructure projects such as strengthening the MCS land-based office, seafood processing, rehabilitation and expansion of Betio Port, micro-canning for value addition and export readiness, as well as salt production facilities including machinery, transport, storage, and net repair and recycling activities.
9. Partners outlined numerous future follow-ups to these discussions, including a high-level bilateral meeting during the June 2026 Forum Fisheries Agency Ministerial Forum in New Zealand, an online presentation on tuna fisheries within the BBNJ context, a fisheries and ocean resources regional study tour opportunities in New Zealand, a transition to an online fishery reporting system, and a new coordination mechanism for small island developing states. Additional actions include progress on operational cooperation, structured dialogue on deep sea mining governance and partnership, investment opportunities in Kiritimati Island, streamlined Marine Scientific Research approval processes, assessment of surveillance technology and a national monitoring centre concept design, and confirmation on fund re-allocation for infrastructure development. Other follow-ups involve sharing feasibility studies and Betio Port masterplan, operationalizing the Ara Marawa Policy through implementation tools and resource mobilization, legislative review and coordination for BBNJ domestication, advisory services for value addition and investment gap analysis, engagement with the Pacific Ocean Finance expert group, donor coordination through country operations meetings, and continued regional alignment with the Blue Pacific and regional ocean initiatives.
10. Partners discussed coordination of government priorities and programmatic complementarity, child nutrition, food security, health, education, child protection, collaboration with the fisheries sector, project design and donor funding access, water resilience, solar systems, spatial planning, biodiversity financing, alignment of country plans with government priorities, gender equality, gender-based violence, mainstreaming gender into policies and programmes, livelihoods and market access, and fisheries as a potential area for future collaboration.

11. Hon. Tiwau acknowledge all Te Wa partners for their engagement and commitment, valued collaboration, and ongoing support towards strengthening the fisheries and ocean sector and advancing sustainable development opportunities for Kiribati. Hon. Tiwau further highlighted the importance of the partnerships and future follow up discussions, on supporting capacity building, technical development, and future fisheries/ocean related initiatives that contribute to economic growth and improved livelihoods for communities of Kiribati.
12. Te Wa Forum concluded successfully on May 7, 2026, with partners and the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MFOR) reaching a renewed understanding of the future cooperation landscape for Kiribati's fisheries and ocean sector, and potential areas of immediate implementation. The next Te Wa Forum is expected to reconvene again in 2029.