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## **Kiribati Republic President Aote Tong to Address California and the World Ocean 2010, Highlight World's Largest Marine Protected Area**

*Proposals for California's Marine Protected Area Network Completed for Entire Open Ocean Coast*

**San Francisco - Sept. 7, 2010** – California and the Pacific Island Republic of Kiribati are contrasted in size, separated by the Pacific, yet inextricably linked in their ocean protection efforts. That connection will be brought home when Kiribati President Aote Tong addresses *California and the World Ocean 2010*, on Wednesday, Sept. 8 at 8:15 a.m., at the Hyatt Regency, San Francisco.

For the first time in four years, *California and the World Ocean 2010*, (CWO '10), Sept. 7-10, will again host world leaders who represent local, state, national and international interests, industry, scientists, non-governmental organizations and foundations. President Tong will be joined by U.S. Rep. Sam Farr, NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco, David Rockefeller Jr., and hundreds of international and national ocean protection experts.

President Tong's Pacific Island nation has created the largest marine protected area in the world. The Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), established in January 2008, is a California-sized area that covers 158,453 square miles and includes one of the world's last intact oceanic coral archipelago ecosystems. The ecosystem is comprised of eight coral atolls, two submerged reef systems, underwater mountains and extensive deep-sea habitat.

"For millennia, we have been an ocean people, depending on its many gifts and resources for our survival, but we believe its treasures are to be protected and shared for the long-term benefit of people everywhere. In this regard the Phoenix Islands Protected Area is our gift to humanity," said President Tong in 2008.

The Republic of Kiribati also faces eminent threats from global climate change that include sea level rise. Many of its atolls are only a few feet above the Central Pacific, near the equator between Hawaii and Fiji. As the largest atoll nation in the world, Kiribati is geographically defined by 33 islands and three distinct island groups; The Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands and the Line Islands. The Kiribati Republic could become the first nation to have its entire territory vanish due to global climate change. In 2008, President Tong said that his country has 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."

California and Kiribati are members of the *Pacific 2020 Challenge*, a consortium of Pacific Rim nations working to focus global attention, build new partnerships and generate the necessary commitments to reduce or eliminate threats to the world's largest natural resource, the Pacific Ocean, by 2020.

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According to the *Pacific 2020 Challenge*, fifty-six countries and territories with a total population of 2.9 billion either border or are surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. Its ecosystems support the most rare, endangered and threatened species on Earth, provide two out of every three fish harvested on the planet, and support a multi-billion dollar tourism industry.

### **California's Marine Protected Areas**

Gov. Schwarzenegger has made ocean and coastal protection a priority through significant policy advancements during his administration. These include his 2004 Ocean Action Plan, creating California's Ocean Protection Council, developing the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health, his global effort to combat climate change through AB32 and completing proposals for California's network of marine protected areas.

"We have dramatically advanced ocean protection policy, by improving our coastal water quality, fisheries, and beaches and the environmental and economic resources they support," said California Secretary for Natural Resources Lester Snow. "When we look back upon the natural resources legacy of the Schwarzenegger administration the achievements we've made to safeguard our ocean and coast and fight global warming will stand atop the list and may very well stand the test of time."

With the North Coast stakeholders group completing a single proposal last week, California's network of marine protected areas, a milestone of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's ocean protection legacy, has been identified for the state's entire open ocean coast.

Four study regions make up California's marine protected area network. Two study region proposals, the central and north central coast, have been approved by the state Fish and Game Commission. The remaining two study region proposals are scheduled before the Commission; the South Coast proposal in December and the North Coast proposal in early 2011. In completing this implementation phase of the Marine Life Protection Act, Governor Schwarzenegger delivered on his promise to implement the law.

### **Google Earth Ocean "Fly-Under"**

Also on Sept. 8, during the 8:15 a.m. session, Google Earth Vice President John Hanke is scheduled to demonstrate Google Earth technology with an ocean "fly-under" of California's seafloor. Google Earth technology and the California Seafloor Mapping Program are unlocking the mysteries of the deep by providing access to 3,300 new miles of California beneath the ocean. Using technology to present data is critical to monitoring marine protected areas, understanding underwater habitats that support fisheries and other marine life, ensuring vessel safety and evaluating earthquake and tsunamis hazards.

CWO '10 presentations will address ocean and coastal subjects that can be applied to resource management and policy. Emerging topics such as climate change impacts, marine spatial planning, marine protected areas, regional ocean governance, and renewable offshore energy will be featured, among other important topics. Presentations will focus on actions that can be taken at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels.

*California and the World Ocean 2010*, Sept. 7-10 at the Hyatt Regency, San Francisco, is an international ocean conference held every four years. Scientists, policy experts and leaders from around the world meet to exchange ideas, share scientific discoveries, help memorialize achievements made to date in ocean and coastal protection and management and shape approaches to meet future global ocean challenges. For more information see the CWO '10 Web site <http://www.cce.csus.edu/cwo>