By Anote Tong
Former President of the Republic of Kiribati

Former President Anote Tong of Kiribati led his country for 13 years (2003 – 2016) and has become a respected global leader for climate action around the world.

Kiribati has about as much land as Singapore, split into 33 islands spread across an ocean area the size of India! The country is 99.98% ocean and as such Kiribati is experiencing the future of our climate, our coastlines and our oceans TODAY. Singapore’s geography, like Kiribati’s, makes it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise but we might also hold the technical and financial resources suited to lead a response in search of a more sustainable future – a response that can also represent a huge opportunity for future growth. It is true that even under current warming scenarios, we will need new innovations in nearly all areas of modern coastal and urban design, as well as in the effective assessment and insurance of risks for which no reliable models apply. These are challenges we must address, and the cost of doing so will never be as low as it is now.

President Tong is a self-proclaimed “rational radical” raising awareness for the greatest moral and economic challenge facing humanity today. While in leadership President Tong expressed the climate crisis in terms of national sovereignty, taking visionary action to secure the long-term well-being of his people. As a Distinguished Fellow at Conservation International, President Tong has continued his visionary work to protect the one blue home we all share.