

Following a recent decision by its Cabinet to buy land in Fiji as 'climate change insurance' for its population, Kiribati President, Anote Tong, has called on the international community to address the effects of climate change that could wipe out the entire Pacific archipelago.

While the governments of both the Pacific island nations are currently in talks about the nearly 6,000 acres of fertile land on Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, which is being offered by a church group for \$9.6 million, President Tong hopes that it will never be necessary for the 103,000 people of Kiribati to leave.

The move comes three years after President Tong took centre stage at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction to implore the international community to take effective action against climate change before it became too late for Kiribati and other small island developing states of the Pacific.

This week he told the media: "We would hope not to put everyone on one piece of land, but if it became absolutely necessary, yes, we could do it. It wouldn't be for me, personally, but would apply more to a younger generation. For them, moving won't be a matter of choice. It's basically going to be a matter of survival." ...

Kiribati is at the heart of the debate on climate change. Many of its atolls rise just 2.0 metres above sea level. It is comprised of 33 tiny islands scattered across the ocean with more than half its population crowded onto one island — South Tarawa, the capital.

This recent development in Kiribati comes on the heels of a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report released last week, which states that low-lying Pacific islands will be extremely vulnerable to sea-level rise, high intensity cyclones, and storm surges.

The report, *Addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific*, highlights that with warmer seas, more intense cyclones could become a pattern. It further predicts widespread coastal inundation for Kiribati's main island.

Released at the Second Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum in Bangkok, the report identifies Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Papua New Guinea as Pacific migration hotspots due to climate change.

-Brigitte Leoni, "Kiribati Buys Land on Fiji" (March 15, 2012) excerpt