

United States and Kiribati Sign Maritime Boundary Treaty

Written by Administrator

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Majuro, September 6, 2013 - This afternoon, the United States and the Republic of Kiribati signed a boundary treaty delimiting the waters between their two countries. The boundary treaty was signed on behalf of the United States by Ambassador Frankie A. Reed and, for the Republic of Kiribati, by President Anote Tong. The treaty was signed in Majuro, Marshall Islands, in connection with the Pacific Islands Forum.

During the signing ceremony Ambassador Reed said, “This maritime boundary treaty with Kiribati further highlights that the U.S. is a pacific nation. We look forward to deepening our already strong relationship with Kiribati here at the Forum and in November, during the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa.”

She added, “The negotiations leading up to this important moment were extremely cordial, productive, and efficient, and the U.S. team extends its appreciation to Kiribati’s representatives for the manner in which the two negotiating teams were able to work together in a spirit of collaboration. It was truly a pleasure to work together with Kiribati on this important endeavor.”

President Tong said, “The signing of this Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and my country signify the vital importance of clearly establishing the national limits of jurisdictions under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

This also marks the final maritime treaty to be signed by Kiribati with her neighboring states. I am immensely proud of this milestone that my country has taken in finalizing her maritime

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jurisdiction to enhance her management and governance over its ocean resources.”

President Tong noted that the signing was a result of collaborative and tireless works amongst several agencies within Kiribati as well as the international partners including the SOPAC Division of SPC, Forum Fisheries Agencies, Geoscience of Australia, Australian Attorney General's office, University of Sydney, UNEP Arendal and Commonwealth Secretariat, with funding from AUSAID.

The treaty is a significant accomplishment for both countries and signifies the collaborative spirit and friendly relations between the United States and Kiribati. It represents the first treaty to delimit a maritime boundary that the United States has signed since 2000 and reflects the United States' growing effort to address unsettled maritime boundaries with its neighbors.

Using three separate boundary lines, the treaty will divide the maritime space between the U.S. islands of Palmyra Atoll, Kingman Reef, Jarvis Island and Baker Island and the Kiribati Line and Phoenix island groups.

The treaty, with appropriate technical adjustments, formalizes boundaries that had been informally adhered to by the two countries previously on the basis of the principle of equidistance, such that the lines are equal in distance from each country. The three boundaries, taken together, approximate 1,260 nautical miles in length and form the second longest among all U.S. maritime boundaries.

The treaty will enter into force upon ratification by both countries. For the United States, ratification is subject to the advice and consent of the United States Senate.