

On 26 April 2014, Mr. Andris Piebalgs European Commissioner for Development, Mr. Tererei Aruee, Officer in Charge, Ministry of Line and Phoenix Islands Development, Government of Kiribati, and Mr. George Beck, representing the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), inaugurated the office for the EUR 4.8 million 'Improving Drinking Water Supply in Kiritimati Island' project.

"The European Union and Kiribati have forged a fruitful friendship over almost four decades. This initiative is a concrete example of our strong partnership and continued commitment to support the government of Kiribati and its people in their efforts towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals".

The representative from the Government of Kiribati, Mr. Tererei Aruee stated that "water is an important priority of the Government and the rehabilitation of the reticulated water supply through this project will benefit the majority of residents on Kiritimati Island.

The Government appreciates the assistance of the European Union through this project and is committed to working closely with SPC in improving the reticulated water supply system."

Mr. George Beck further added that "the focus will be to have a good understanding of the status of the ground water, building new infrastructure to improve supply to the Ronton community particularly the hospital and build capacity within the Ministry to monitor and maintain the water supply system."

The EUR 4.8 million 'Improving Drinking Water Supply in Kiritimati' project is funded by the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) bilateral envelope for Kiribati. It aims to provide 85% of the island's households with improved water sources and 75% of households, schools and hospitals in London and Tennessee with continuous water supply.

The project will also help the people of Kiritimati build resilience against the global threat of climate change which may cause salt water intrusion into groundwater reserves and increase the incidence and/or severity of extreme weather events, including droughts.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community is the project implementing partner.