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## Phoenix Islands (Kiribati) No 1325

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### 1. BASIC DATA

*Official name as proposed by the State Party:*

Phoenix Islands Protected Area

*Location:*

Phoenix Islands  
Kiribati

*Brief description:*

This nomination proposes inscription of the eight atoll islands, two submerged reefs, at least 14 seamounts and surrounding marine area that comprise the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA). Remotely situated in the Central Pacific Ocean midway between Australia and Hawaii, Kiribati includes the Gilbert Islands, the Phoenix Islands and the Line Islands that together make up less than 1% of its sovereign domain. PIPA, described as "an oceanic wilderness", is the largest marine protected area in the world.

*Background information:*

This is a new nomination. The property is nominated on the basis of criteria (vii), (ix) and (x).

*Literature consulted (selection):*

Smith, A. and Jones, K. L., *Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific Islands: ICOMOS Thematic Study*, December 2007.

*Date of ICOMOS approval of this report:* 17 March 2010

### 2. THE PROPERTY

Currently uninhabited except for government caretakers on the largest atoll (Kanton, 9km<sup>2</sup>), the islands have material evidences and immaterial associations of periodic occupation over one to two millennia. Cultural associations are described in the nomination document (pp.60-82), and work is underway to determine the importance of the cultural values. The area has not been extensively studied in the academic literature. Identified cultural values relate to archaeological evidence of early colonization by Micronesians and Polynesians, ancient and recent oral traditions, and archaeological remains of post-contact land uses from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 3. ICOMOS CONCLUSIONS

ICOMOS considers that further work would be required to determine whether there might be justification for the use of cultural criteria in relation to the link between the atolls and migrations across the Pacific. ICOMOS considers that the ICOMOS Thematic Study on *Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific Islands* would be relevant to guide any further work that might be undertaken in a comparative context.

Even though ICOMOS considers that, on the basis of current evidence, the use of cultural criteria could not be justified, it nevertheless encourages the State Party to identify and respect the cultural values in the management of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area.